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HISTORICAL CHARACTERS:

TALLEYRAND

MACKINTOSH COBBETT

CANNING

BY THE RIGHT HON.

SIR HENRY LYTTON BULWER, G.C.B.

NEW EDITION.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,
Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.
1870.

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LONDON: PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS,
STAMFORD STREET AND CHARING CROSS.

TO LORD LYTTON.

My dear Edward,

The idea of this work, which I dedicate to you in testimony of the affection and friendship which have always united us, was conceived many years ago. I wished to give some general idea of modern history, from the period of the French Revolution of 1789 down to our own times, in a series of personal sketches. In these sketches I was disposed to select types of particular characters, thinking that in this way it is easier to paint with force and clearness both an individual and an epoch. The outlines of Talleyrand, Cobbett, and others, were then imperfectly traced; and Canning and Mackintosh have been little altered.

The manuscript, however, was laid aside amidst the labours of an active professional career, and only thought of since complete leisure created the wish for some employment. It was then that I resumed my task.

I need not say that the portraits I give here are but a few of those I commenced, but the constant change of residence, rendered necessary by the state of health in which I left Constantinople, interfered with the comple-

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tion of my design, and added to the defects which, under any circumstances, would have been found in the following pages.

I regret that the character of Sir Robert Peel, which I intended to place side by side with that of Mr. Canning, would have swollen these volumes to too great a size; it is reserved, therefore, for a future occasion.

Ever yours affectionately,

H. L. Bulwer.

13, Rue Royale, Paris.
Oct. 10, 1867.

PREFACE TO THIS NEW EDITION.

The sale which this work has had in its original form has induced my publisher to recommend a cheaper and more popular one; and I myself gladly seize the opportunity of correcting some of the errors in print and expression which, though gradually diminished in preceding editions, left even the last edition imperfect. An author with ordinary modesty must always be conscious of many defects in his own work. I am so in mine. Still I venture to say that the portraits I have drawn have, upon the whole, been thought truthful and impartial; and though I have been often reminded of the difficulty which Sir Walter Raleigh, when writing the History of the World, experienced in ascertaining the real particulars of a tumult that took place under his windows—almost every anecdote one hears on the best authority being certain to find contradiction in some of its particulars—I have not refrained from quoting those anecdotes which came to me from good authority or the general report of the period; since a story which brings into relief the reputed character of the person it is applied to, and which, to use the Italian proverb, ought to be true if it is not so, is far from being indifferent to history.

In conclusion, I cannot but express my thanks, not only to public, but to private and previously unknown critics, whose remarks have always received a willing and grateful attention, and to whose suggestions I am greatly indebted.

To the four sketches to be found in this volume will be added, if Providence favours my intention, a few more equally illustrative of personal character and public events. Many of these are nearly ready for press; but I have laid them by until the memoir of Lord Palmerston, on which I am now occupied, and which will mainly consist of his own MS., is completed.

Nov. 6, 1869.

TALLEYRAND,

THE POLITIC MAN.

Part I.

FROM THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE REVOLUTION TO THE EXPOSITION OF THE STATE OF THE NATION.

Different types of men.—M. de Talleyrand, the politic man.—Character of the eighteenth century, which had formed him.—Birth, personal description, entry into church.—Causes of revolution.—States-General.—Talleyrand's influence over clergy; over the decision as to the instructions of members, and the drawing up of the rights of man.—Courage in times of danger.—Financial knowledge.—Propositions relative to church property.—Discredit with the Court party.—Popularity with the Assembly.—Charged to draw up its manifesto to the nation.—Project about uniformity of weights and measures.

I.

There are many men in all times who employ themselves actively in public affairs; but very few amongst these deserve the title of "Men of action."

The rare individuals who justly claim this designation, and whose existence exercises so important an influence over the age in which they appear, must possess, in no ordinary degree, intelligence, energy, and judgment; but these qualities are found blended in different degrees in the different classes or types of men who, as soldiers, sovereigns, or statesmen, command the destiny of their times.

They in whom superior intelligence, energy, and judgment are equally united, mount with firm and rapid pace the loftiest steeps of ambition, and establish themselves permanently on the heights to which they have safely ascended. Such men usually pursue some fixed plan or

predominant idea with stern caution and indomitable perseverance, adapting their means to their end, but always keeping their end clearly in view, and never, in the pursuit of it, overstepping that line by which difficulties are separated from impossibilities. Cardinal de Richelieu in France, and William III. in England, are types of this heroic race.

On the other hand, they in whom the judgment, however great, is not sufficient to curb the energy and govern the intellect which over-stimulates their nature, blaze out, meteor-like, in history, but rather excite temporary admiration than leave behind them permanent results. Their exploits far surpass those of other men, and assume for a moment an almost supernatural appearance: but, as their rise is usually sudden and prodigious, their ruin is also frequently abrupt and total. Carried on by a force over which they gradually lose all control, from one act of audacity to another more daring, their genius sails before the wind, like a vessel with overcrowded canvas, and perishes at last in some violent and sudden squall. Charles XII. of Sweden was an example of this kind in the last century, and Napoleon Bonaparte, if we regard him merely as a conqueror, a more striking one in our own days.

Thirdly, there are men whose energy though constant is never violent, and whose intellect, rather subtle than bold, is attracted by the useful, and careless of the sublime. Shrewd and wary, these men rather take advantage of circumstances than make them. To turn an obstacle, to foresee an event, to seize an opportunity, is their peculiar talent. They are without passions, but self-interest and sagacity combined give them a force like that of passion. The success they obtain is procured by efforts no greater than those of other candidates for public honours, who with an appearance of equal talent vainly struggle after fortune; but all their exertions are made at the most fitting moment, and in the happiest manner.

A nice tact and a far-sighted judgment are the predominant qualities of these "*politic*" persons. They think rarely of what is right in the abstract: they do usually

what is best at the moment. They never play the greatest part amongst their contemporaries : they almost always play a great one ; and, without arriving at those extraordinary positions to which a more adventurous race aspires, generally retain considerable importance, even during the most changeful circumstances, and most commonly preserve in retirement or disgrace much of the consideration they acquired in power. During the intriguing and agitated years which preceded the fall of the Stuarts, there was seen in England a remarkable statesman of the character I have just been describing ; and a comparison might not inappropriately be drawn between the plausible and trimming Halifax and the adroit and accomplished personage whose name is inscribed on these pages.

But although these two renowned advocates of expediency had many qualities in common—the temper, the wit, the knowledge, the acuteness which distinguished the one equally distinguishing the other—nevertheless the Englishman, although a more dexterous debater in public assemblies, had not in action the calm courage, nor in council the prompt decision, for which the Frenchman was remarkable ; neither is his name stamped on the annals of his country in such indelible characters, nor connected with such great and marvellous events.

And yet, notwithstanding the vastness of the stage on which M. de Talleyrand acted, and the importance of the parts which for more than half a century he played, I venture to doubt whether his character has ever been fairly given, or is at this moment justly appreciated ; nor is this altogether surprising. In a life so long, brilliant, and varied, we must expect to find a diversity of impressions succeeding and effacing each other ; and not a few who admired the captivating companion, and reverenced the skilful minister of foreign affairs, were ignorant that the celebrated wit and sagacious diplomatist had exhibited an exquisite taste in letters, and a profound knowledge in legislation and finance. Moreover, though it may appear singular, it will be found true, that it is precisely those public men who are the most tolerant to adverse opinions, and the least prone to personal enmities, who oftentimes

gather round their own reputation, at least during a time, the darkest obloquy and the most terrible reproaches. The reason for this is simple: such men are themselves neither subject to any predominant affection, nor devoted to any favourite theory. Calm and impartial, they are lenient and forgiving. On the other hand, men who love things passionately, or venerate things deeply, despise those who forsake—and detest those who oppose—the objects of their adoration or respect. Thus, the royalist, ready to lay down his life for his legitimate sovereign; the republican, bent upon glorious imitations of old Rome and Greece; the soldier, devoted to the chief who had led him from victory to victory, could not but speak with bitterness and indignation of one who commenced the Revolution against Louis XVI., aided in the overthrow of the French Republic, and dictated the proscription of the great captain whose armies had marched for a while triumphant over Europe.

The most ardent and violent of the men of M. de Talleyrand's time were consequently the most ardent and violent condemners of his conduct; and he who turns over the various works in which that conduct is spoken of by insignificant critics,* will be tempted to coincide with the remark of the great wit of the eighteenth century: "*C'est un terrible avantage de n'avoir rien fait; mais il ne faut pas en abuser.*"†

How far such writers were justified will be seen more or less in the following pages, which are written with no intention to paint a character deserving of eulogy or inviting to imitation, but simply with the view of illustrating a remarkable class of men by a very remarkable man, who happened to live at a period which will never cease to occupy and interest posterity.

* Many of those works confound dates and names, and make the most absurd, as well as the most malignant, accusations; but here and there they relate facts which authentic documents have since confirmed, as well as anecdotes which I have heard contemporaries repeat, and of which I shall therefore take advantage.

† "It is a terrible advantage to have done nothing; but one must not abuse it."

II.

Charles Maurice Talleyrand de Périgord was born February 2, 1754.* The House of Périgord was one of the noblest in France, and in the earliest ages of the French monarchy possessed sovereign power. The principality of Chalais, the only one which existed, I believe, in the time of Louis XIV. (for the other personages called princes at the French court took their titles as princes of the Roman States or the German Empire, and ranked after French dukes), is said to have been eight centuries in this family. Talleyrand, a name usually attached to that of Périgord, and anciently written *Tailleran*, is supposed to have been a sort of *sobriquet*, or nickname, and derived from the words, "*tailler les rangs*" (cut through the ranks). It was borne by Helie V., one of the sovereign counts of Périgord, who lived in 1118; and from this prince (Helie V.) descended two branches of the Talleyrand-Périgords; the one was extinct before the time of Louis XVI., the other, being the younger branch, was then represented by a Comte de Périgord, Captain of the Guards, and Governor of the States of Languedoc. A brother of this Comte de Périgord was the father of Charles Maurice Talleyrand de Périgord (the subject of this memoir), whose mother, Eléonore de Damas, daughter of the Marquis de Damas, was also of a highly noble family, and a lady alike remarkable for her beauty and her virtue.†

III.

The seal which marks our destiny has usually been stamped on our childhood; and most men, as they look back to their early youth, can remember the accident, the

* There seems to be some difficulty in ascertaining the date of M. de Talleyrand's birth with exactitude. I have been told, on apparently the best authority, that he was born on the 7th of March, on the 1st of September, and on the 2nd of February. This last is the date I have selected, having reason upon the whole to believe it the correct one. With respect to the year there is no dispute.

† The Countess de Talleyrand lived to 1809; and was very proud of the talents of her son, but regretting, it is said, the use he had made of them.

book, the conversation, which gave that shape to their character which events have subsequently developed.

M. de Talleyrand was in infancy an exile from his home; the fortune of his parents did not correspond with their rank: his father,* a soldier, was always at the court or the camp; his mother held a situation in the household at Versailles. To both a child was an incumbrance, and Maurice immediately at his birth was put out to nurse (as was indeed at that time frequently the custom) in the country, where, either by chance or neglect, he met with a fall which occasioned lameness. This infirmity, when the almost forgotten child at the age of twelve or thirteen was brought up to Paris for the purpose of receiving rather a tardy education, had become incurable; and by a *conseil de famille*, it was decided that the younger brother, the Comte d'Archambaud—subsequently known as one of the handsomest and most elegant of the courtiers of Louis XVI., and whom I can remember under the title of Duc de Périgord—(a title given by Louis XVIII.), should be considered the elder brother, and enter the army, whilst the elder son should be pronounced the younger son, and devoted to the clerical profession, into which the Périgords knew they had sufficient influence to procure his admission, notwithstanding the infirmity which, under ordinary circumstances, would have been a reason for excluding him from the service of the church. From this moment the boy—hitherto lively, idle, and reckless—became taciturn, studious, and calculating. His early propensities remained, for nature admits of no radical change; but they were coloured by disappointment, or combated by ambition. We see traces of gaiety in the companion who, though rarely smiling himself, could always elicit a laugh from others; we see traces of indolence in the statesman who, though always occupied, never did more than the necessity of the case exacted; we

* This gentleman had been *menin* to the Dauphin, son of Louis XV. He subsequently commanded a regiment in the Seven Years' War, and rose to be lieutenant-general in the King's armies. He bore an excellent character, but was never considered to have any ability.

see traces of recklessness in the gambler and politician who, after a shrewd glance at the chances, was often disposed to risk his fortune, or his career, on a speculation for money or power: but the mind had been darkened and the heart hardened; and the youth who might easily and carelessly have accepted a prosperous fate, was ushered into the world with a determination to wrestle with an adverse one.

Nor did any paternal advice or maternal care regulate or soften the dispositions which were thus being formed. From the nurse in the country, the lame young Périgord —for Périgord was the name which at this time he bore—was transplanted to the "Collége d'Harcourt," since called that of St. Louis. He entered it more ignorant, perhaps, than any boy of his years; but he soon gained its first prizes, and became one of its most distinguished scholars.

At the "Séminaire de St. Sulpice," to which he was removed in 1770, his talent for disputation attracted attention, and even some of his compositions were long remembered and quoted by contemporaries. Whilst at the Sorbonne, where he subsequently completed his studies, this scion of one of the most illustrious French houses was often pointed out as a remarkably clever, silent, and profligate young man: who made no secret of his dislike to the profession that had been chosen for him, but was certain to arrive at its highest honours.

With such prospects and such dispositions, M. de Talleyrand entered, in 1773, the Gallican Church.

IV.

At this time we have to fancy the young ecclesiastic—a gentleman about twenty years of age, very smart in his clerical attire, and with a countenance which, without being handsome, was singularly attractive from the triple expression of softness, impudence, and wit. If we are to credit the chronicles of that day, his first advance in his profession was owing to one of those *bon mots* by which so many of the subsequent steps of his varied career were distinguished.

There were assembled at Madame Dubarry's a number of young gentlemen, rather free in their conversation and prodigal in their boasts: no beauty had been veiled to their desires, no virtue had been able to resist their attacks. The subject of this memoir alone said nothing. "And what makes you so sad and silent?" asked the hostess. "*Hélas! madame, je faisais une réflexion bien triste.*" "*Et laquelle?*" "*Ah, madame, que Paris est une ville dans laquelle il est bien plus aisé d'avoir des femmes que des abbayes.*"

The saying, so goes the story, was considered charming, and being reported to Louis XV., was rewarded by that monarch with the benefice desired. The Abbé de Périgord's career, thus commenced, did not long linger. Within a few years after entering the church, aided by his birth and abilities, he obtained (in 1780) the distinguished position of "Agent-General" of the French clergy—this title designating an important personage who administered the ecclesiastical revenues, which were then immense, under the control of regular assemblies.

It is a curious trait in the manners of these times that, whilst holding this high post as a priest, the Abbé de Périgord fitted out a vessel as a privateer; and, it being his intention to plunder the English, received from the French government the cannon he required for so pious a purpose.*

I am unable to say what success attended M. de Talleyrand's naval enterprise; but when, in 1785, he had to give an account of his clerical administration, the very clear and statesmanlike manner in which he did so, raised him, in the opinion of the public, from the position of a clever man, into that of an able one. Nor was this all. The peculiar nature of the first public duties which he thus exercised, directed his mind towards those questions which the increasing deficit in the French treasury, and the acknowledged necessity of supplying it, made the fashion: for every one at that time in Paris—ladies, philosophers, wits, and men of fashion—talked finance.

* This singular fact is mentioned by M. Mignet in a short and able memoir, which after M. de Talleyrand's death he read to the French Academy.

Few, however, troubled themselves with acquiring any real insight into so dry a subject. But M. de Talleyrand, although constitutionally averse to hard or continued study, supplied this defect by always seeking and living with men who were the best informed on those subjects with which he wished to become acquainted. In this manner his own information became essentially practical, and the knowledge he obtained of details (furnishing him with a variety of facts, which he always knew how to quote opportunely), attracted the attention and patronage of M. de Calonne, then at the head of the French government, and who, being himself as much addicted to pleasure as to affairs, was not sorry to sanction the doctrine that a man of the world might also be a man of business.

Still, though thus early marked out as a person who, after the example of his great ecclesiastical predecessors, might rise to the highest dignities in the Church and State, the Abbé de Périgord showed an almost ostentatious disregard for the duties and decorum of the profession which he had been forced to embrace. Indeed, he seemed to make in this sort of conduct a kind of protest against the decree by which his birthright had been set aside, and almost to glory in the publication of profane epigrams and amorous adventures which amused the world but scandalised the Church. Thus, each year, which increased his reputation for ability, added to the stories by which public rumour exaggerated his immorality; and in 1788, when the bishopric of Autun, to which he had for some time been looking forward, became vacant, Louis XVI. was unwilling to confer the dignity of prelate on so irregular an ecclesiastic. For four months the appointment was not filled up. But the Abbé de Périgord's father lay at that time on his death-bed: he was visited by the kind-hearted Louis in this condition, and he begged the monarch, as the last request of a dying and faithful servant, to grant the bishopric in question to his son. The King could not withstand such a prayer at such a moment, and the Abbé de Périgord was consecrated Bishop of Autun on the 17th of January, 1789—four months before the assembling of the States-General.

V.

The period which had elapsed between the time at which M. de Talleyrand had entered the Church, and that at which he attained the episcopal dignity, is, perhaps, the most interesting in modern civilization. At no epoch did society ever present so bright and polished a surface as it did in the French capital during these fourteen or fifteen years. The still great fortunes of the *grand seigneur*, the profuse expenditure of the financier, the splendour of a court embellished by that love for the arts and for letters which the Medici had imported from Italy, and which Louis XIV. had made a part of his royal magnificence, all contributed to surround life with a taste in luxury which has never been surpassed. Rich manufactures of silk, exquisite chiseling in bronze, china equally beautiful in form and decoration, and paintings somewhat effeminate, but graceful, and which still give celebrity to the names of Watteau, Boucher, and Greuze, mark the elegant refinement that presided over those days.

Nothing, however, in those courtly times had been carried to such perfection as the art of living, and the habits of social intercourse. People did not then shut up their houses from their friends if they were poor, nor merely open them in order to give gorgeous and pompous entertainments if they were rich. Persons who suited and sympathised, assembled in small circles, which permitted the access of new members cautiously, but received all who had once been admitted without preference or distinction.

In these circles, the courtier, though confident of the fixed superiority of his birth, paid homage to the accident of genius in the man of letters; and the literary man, however proud of his works, or conscious of his talents, rendered the customary tribute of respect to high rank and station.

Thus poets and princes, ministers of state, and members of learned academies—men of wit, and men of the world—met on a footing of apparent equality, and real familiarity, on a stage where Beauty, ambitious of universal admiration,

cultivated her mind as much as her person, and established one presiding theory—"that all had to make themselves agreeable."

The evening parties of Madame de Brignole, and of Madame du Deffand, the little suppers of Madame Geoffrin, the dinners of Baron Holbach and Helvetius, the musical receptions of the Abbé Morelet, and the breakfasts of Madame Necker, were only specimens of the sort of assemblies which existed amongst different classes, and throughout every street and corner of Paris and Versailles.

Here, all orders mingled with suitable deference towards each other. But beneath this brilliant show of actual gaiety and apparent unity there lay brooding a spirit of dissatisfaction and expectation, which a variety of peculiar circumstances tended, at that time, to exaggerate in France, but which is in fact the usual characteristic of every intellectual community, when neither over-enervated by luxury and peace, nor over-wearied by war and civil commotion. Its natural consequence was a desire for change, which diffused its influence over all things—great and small. Léonard revolutionized the head-dress of the French lady: Diderot and Beaumarchais, the principles of the French stage: Turgot and Necker, the political economy and financial system of the French state: and just at this moment, when the imagination was on the stretch for novelty, as if Providence designed for some mysterious end to encourage the aspiring genius of the epoch, the balloon of Montgolfier took its flight from the Tuileries, and the most romantic dreams were surpassed by a reality.

It was not, however, a mere discontent with the present, a mere hope in the future, a mere passion after things new, however violent that passion might be, which constituted the peril, nor, indeed, the peculiarity of the hour.

In other seasons of this kind, the wishes and views of men have frequently taken some fixed form—have had some fixed tendency—and in this way their progress has been regulated, and their result, even from a distance, foreseen.

But at the period to which I am referring, there was no general conception or aim which cast a decisive shadow over coming events, and promised any specific future in exchange for the present, evidently passing away.

There still lived, though on the verge of the tomb, an individual to whom this distinguishing misfortune of the eighteenth century was in no small degree attributable. The keen sagacity of Voltaire, his piercing raillery, his brilliant and epigrammatic eloquence, had ridiculed and destroyed all faith in old abuses, but had never attempted to give even a sketch of what was to come in their room. "*Magis habuit quod fugeret quam quod sequeretur.*" The effect of his genius, therefore, had been to create around him a sort of luminous mist, produced by the blending of curiosity and doubt; an atmosphere favourable to scepticism, favourable to credulity; and, above all things, generative of enthusiasts and empirics. St. Germain the alchymist, Cagliostro the conjurer, Condorcet the publicist, Marat the politician, were the successive produce of this marvellous and singular epoch. And thus it was,—amidst a general possession of privileges, and a general equality of customs and ideas—amidst a great generosity of sentiment, and an almost entire absence of principle in a society unequalled in its charms, unbounded in its hopes, and altogether ignorant of its destiny,—that the flower of M. de Talleyrand's manhood was passed.

VI.

I have dwelt at some length upon the characteristics—

> "Of those gay times of elegance and ease,
> When Pleasure learnt so gracefully to please:
> When wits and courtiers held the same resorts,
> The courtiers wits, and all wits fit for courts:
> When woman, perfect in her siren art,
> Subdued the mind, and trifled with the heart;
> When Wisdom's lights in fanes fantastic shone,
> And Taste had principles, and Virtue none:
> When schools disdained the morals understood,
> And sceptics boasted of some better good:
> When all was Fairyland which met the view,
> No truth untheorized, and no theory true."
>
> * * * * * *

I have dwelt, I say, at some length upon the characteristics of those times; because it is never to be forgotten that the personage I have to speak of was their child. To the latest hour of his existence he fondly cherished their memory; to them he owed many of those graces which his friends still delight to recall: to them, most of those faults which his enemies have so frequently portrayed.

The great test of his understanding was that he totally escaped all their grosser delusions. Of this I am able to give a striking proof. It has been said that M. de Talleyrand was raised to the episcopal dignity in January, 1789, four months previous to the assembling of the States-General. To that great Assembly he was immediately named by the *baillage* of his own diocese; and perhaps there is hardly to be found on record a more remarkable example of human sagacity and foresight than in the new bishop's address to the body which had chosen him its representative.

In this address, which I have now before me, he separates all the reforms which were practicable and expedient, from all the schemes which were visionary and dangerous—the one and the other being at that time confused and jumbled together in the half-frenzied brains of his countrymen: he omits none of those advantages in government, legislation, finance—for he embraces all these —which fifty years have gradually given to France: he mentions none of those projects of which time, experience, and reason have shown the absurdity and futility.

A charter giving to all equal rights: a great code embodying and simplifying all existing and necessary laws: a due provision for prompt justice: the abolition of arbitrary arrest: the mitigation of the laws between debtor and creditor: the institution of trial by jury: the liberty of the press, and the inviolability of private correspondence: the destruction of those interior imposts which cut up France into provinces, and of those restrictions by which all but members of guilds were excluded from particular trades: the introduction of order into the finances under a well-regulated system of public accounts:

the suppression of all feudal privileges: and the organization of a well-considered general plan of taxation: such were the changes which the Bishop of Autun suggested in the year 1789. He said nothing of the perfectibility of the human race: of a total reorganization of society under a new system of capital and labour: he did not promise an eternal peace, nor preach a general fraternity amongst all races and creeds. The ameliorations he proposed were plain and simple; they affiliated with ideas already received, and could be grafted on the roots of a society already existing. They have stood the test of eighty years—now advanced by fortunate events, now retarded by adverse ones—some of them have been disdained by demagogues, others denounced by despots;—they have passed through the ordeal of successive revolutions; and they furnish at this instant the foundations on which all wise and enlightened Frenchmen desire to establish the condition of government and society in their great and noble country. Let us do honour to an intelligence that could trace these limits for a rising generation; to a discretion that resisted the temptation to stray beyond them!

VII.

About the time of the assembling of the States-General, there appeared a work which it is now curious to refer to —it was by the pen of Laclos—entitled *Galerie des États-Généraux*. This work gave a sketch under assumed names of the principal personages likely to figure in the States-General. Amongst a variety of portraits, are to be found those of General Lafayette and the Bishop of Autun; the first under the name of Philarète, the second under that of Amène; and, assuredly, the author startles us by his nice perception of the character and by his prophetic sagacity as to the career of these two men. It is well, however, to remember that Laclos frequented the Palais Royal, which the moral and punctilious soldier of Washington scrupulously avoided. The criticism I give, therefore, is not an impartial one. For, if General Lafayette was neither a hero nor a statesman, he was, take him all in all, one of the most eminent personages of his

time, and occupied, at two or three periods, one of the most prominent positions in his country.

"Philarète," says M. Laclos, "having found it easy to become a hero, fancies it will be as easy to become a statesman. The misfortune of Philarète is that he has great pretensions and ordinary conceptions. He has persuaded himself that he was the author of the revolution in America; he is arranging himself so as to become one of the principal actors in a revolution in France.

"He mistakes notoriety for glory, an event for a success, a sword for a monument, a compliment for immortality. He does not like the court, because he is not at his ease in it; nor the world, because there he is confounded with the many; nor women, because they injure the reputation of a man, while they do not add to his position. But he is fond of clubs, because he there picks up the ideas of others; of strangers, because they only examine a foreigner superficially; of mediocrity, because it listens and admires.

"Philarète will be faithful to whatever party he adopts, without being able to assign, even to himself, any good reasons for being so. He has no very accurate ideas of constitutional authority, but the word 'liberty' has a charm for him, because it rouses an ambition which he scarcely knows what to do with. Such is Philarète. He merits attention, because, after all, he is better than most of his rivals. That the world has been more favourable to him than he deserves, is owing to the fact that he has done a great deal in it, considering the poverty of his ability; and people have been grateful to him, rather on account of what he seemed desirous to be, than on account of what he was. Besides, his exterior is modest, and only a few know that the heart of the man is not mirrored on the surface.

"He will never be much more than we see him, for he has little genius, little nerve, little voice, little art, and is greedy of small successes."

Such was the portrait which was drawn of Lafayette; we now come to that of M. de Talleyrand.

"Amène has charming manners, which embellish virtue.

His first title to success is a sound understanding. Judging men with indulgence, events with calmness, he has in all things that moderation which is the characteristic of true philosophy.

"There is a degree of perfection which the intelligence can comprehend rather than realise, and which there is, undoubtedly, a certain degree of greatness in endeavouring to attain; but such brilliant efforts, though they give momentary fame to those who make them, are never of any real utility. Common sense disdains glitter and noise, and, measuring the bounds of human capacity, has not the wild hope of extending them beyond what experience has proved their just limit.

"Amène has no idea of making a great reputation in a day: such reputations, made too quickly, soon begin to decline, and are followed by envy, disappointment, and sorrow. But Amène will *arrive at everything*, because he will always profit by those occasions which present themselves to such as do not attempt to ravish Fortune. Each step will be marked by the development of some talent, and thus he will at last acquire that general high opinion which summons a statesman to every great post that is vacant. Envy, which will always deny something to a person generally praised, will reply to what we have said, that Amène has not that force and energy of character which is necessary to break through the obstacles that impede the course of a public man. It is true he will *yield to circumstances*, to reason, and will deem that he can make *sacrifices to peace without descending from principle;* but firmness and constancy may exist without violent ardour, or vapid enthusiasm.

"Amène has against him his pleasing countenance and seductive manner. I know people whom these advantages displease, and who are also prejudiced against a man who happens to unite the useful chance of birth with the essential qualities of the mind.

"But what are we really to expect from Amène in the States-General? Nothing, if he is inspired with the spirit of class; much, if he acts after his own conceptions, and remembers that a national assembly only contains citizens."

VIII.

Few who read the above sketch will deny to the author of the "*Liaisons Dangereuses*" the merit of discernment. Indeed, to describe M. de Talleyrand at this time seems to have been more appropriate to the pen of the novelist than to that of the historian. Let us picture to ourselves a man of about thirty-five, and appearing somewhat older: his countenance of a long oval; his eyes blue, with an expression at once deep and variable; his lips usually impressed with a smile, which was that of mockery, but not of ill-nature; his nose slightly turned up, but delicate, and remarkable for a constant play in the clearly chiseled nostrils. "He dressed," says one of his many biographers, "like a coxcomb, he thought like a deist, he preached like a saint." At once active and irregular, he found time for everything: the church, the court, the opera. In bed one day from indolence or debauch, up the whole of the following night to prepare a memoir or a speech. Gentle with the humble, haughty with the high; not very exact in paying his debts, but very scrupulous with respect to giving and breaking promises to pay them.

A droll story is related with respect to this last peculiarity. The new Bishop had ordered and received a very handsome carriage, becoming his recent ecclesiastical elevation. He had not, however, settled the coachmaker's "small account." After long waiting and frequent letters, the civil but impatient tradesman determined upon presenting himself every day at the Bishop of Autun's door, at the same time as his equipage.

For several days, M. de Talleyrand saw, without recognising, a well-dressed individual, with his hat in his hand, and bowing very low as he mounted the steps of his coach. "*Et qui êtes vous, mon ami?*" he said at last. "*Je suis votre carrossier, Monseigneur.*" "*Ah! vous êtes mon carrossier; et que voulez-vous, mon carrossier?*" "*Je veux être payé, Monseigneur*, said the coachmaker, humbly. "*Ah! vous êtes mon carrossier, et vous voulez être payé; vous serez payé, mon carrossier.*" "*Et quand, Mon-*

*seigneur ?"** "Hum !" murmured the Bishop, looking at his coachmaker very attentively, and at the same time settling himself in his new carriage: "*Vous êtes bien curieux !*" Such was the Talleyrand of 1789, embodying in himself the ability and the frivolity, the ideas and the habits of a large portion of his class. At once the associate of the Abbé Sieyès, and of Mademoiselle Guimard: a profligate fine gentleman, a deep and wary thinker; and, above all things, the delight and ornament of that gay and graceful society, which, crowned with flowers, was about to be the first victim to its own philosophy. As yet, however, the sky, though troubled, gave no evidence of storm; and never, perhaps, did a great assembly meet with less gloomy anticipations than that which in the pomp and gallantry of feudal show, swept, on the 1st of May, through the royal city of Versailles.

Still, there was even at that moment visible the sign and symbol of the approaching crisis; for dark behind the waving plumes and violet robes of the great dignitaries of Church and State, moved on the black mass, in sable cloak and garb, of the Commons, or tiers-état, the body which had, *as yet, been nothing*, but which had just been told by one of its most illustrious members,† that it *ought to be everything*.

The history of the mighty revolution which at this moment was commencing, is still so stirring amongst us,—the breath of the tempest which then struck down tower and temple, is still so frequently fancied to be rustling about our own dwellings,—that when the mind even now wanders back, around and about this time, it is always with a certain interest and curiosity, and we pause once again to muse, even though we have often before meditated, upon that memorable event which opened a new chapter in the history of the world. And the more we reflect, the

* "And who are you, my friend?" "I am your coachmaker, my lord." "Ah! you are my coachmaker; and what do you want, my coachmaker?" "I want to be paid, my lord." "Ah! you are my coachmaker, and you want to be paid; you shall be paid, my coachmaker." "And when, my lord?" "You are very inquisitive!"

† Sieyès, in a celebrated pamphlet published at this period.

more does it seem surprising that in so civilised an age, and under so well-meaning a sovereign, an august throne and a great society should have been wholly swept away; nor does it appear less astonishing that a monarch with arbitrary sway, that a magistracy with extraordinary privileges, each wishing to retain their authority, should have voluntarily invoked another power, long slumbering in an almost forgotten constitution, and which, when roused into activity, was so immediately omnipotent over parliament and king.

IX.

The outline of Louis XVI.'s reign is easily, though I do not remember where it is briefly, and clearly traced. At its commencement, the influence of new opinions was confined to the library and drawing-room. The modern notions of constitutional liberty and political economy prevalent amongst men of letters, and fashionable amongst men of the world, had not been professed by men in power, and were consequently disdained by that large class which wishes in all countries to pass for the practical portion of the community. At this time, an old minister, himself a courtier, and jealous lest other courtiers should acquire that influence over his master which he possessed, introduced into affairs a set of persons hitherto unknown at court, the most eminent of whom were Turgot, Malesherbes, and Necker; and no sooner had these three eminent reformers obtained a serious political position, than their views acquired a political consideration which had not before belonged to them, and the idea that some great and general reform was shortly to take place entered seriously into the public mind. Each of these ministers would have wished to make the reforms that were most necessary with the aid of the royal authority; and, had they been able to do so, it is probable that they would have preserved the heart and strength of the old monarchy, which was yet only superficially decayed. But the moderate changes which they desired to introduce with the assent of all parties, were opposed by all parties, in spite of —or, perhaps, on account of—their very moderation: for losers are rarely satisfied because their losses are

small, and winners are never contented but when their gains are great.

In the meantime, Maurepas, who would have supported the policy of his colleagues, if it had brought him popularity, was by no means disposed to do so when it gave him trouble. Thus, Malesherbes, Turgot, and Necker were successively forced to resign their offices, without having done anything to establish their own policy, but much to render any other discreditable and difficult.

The publication of the famous "*Compte Rendu*," or balance-sheet of state expenses and receipts, more especially, rendered it impossible to continue to govern as heretofore. And now Maurepas died, and a youthful queen inherited the influence of an old favourite. M. de Calonne, a plausible, clever, but superficial gentleman, was the first minister of any importance chosen by the influence of Marie-Antoinette's friends. He saw that the expenses and receipts of the government must bear some proportion to each other. He trembled at suddenly reducing old charges; new taxes were the only alternative; and yet it was almost impossible to get such taxes from the lower and middle classes, if the clergy and nobility, who conjointly possessed about two-thirds of the soil, were exempted from all contributions to the public wants. The minister, nevertheless, shrunk from despoiling the privileged classes of their immunities, without some authorization from themselves. He called together, therefore, the considerable personages, or "notables," as they were styled, of the realm, and solicited their sanction to new measures and new imposts, some of the former of which would limit their authority, and some of the latter affect their purses.

The "notables" were divided into two factions: the one of which was opposed to M. de Calonne, the other to the changes which he wished to introduce. These two parties united and became irresistible. Amongst their ranks was a personage of great ambition and small capacity—Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse. This man was the most violent of M. de Calonne's opponents. The court turned round suddenly and chose him as M. de

Calonne's successor. This measure, at first, was successful, for conflicting opinions end by creating personal antipathies, and the "notables," in a moment of exultation over the defeated minister, granted everything with facility to the minister who had supplanted him. A new embarrassment, however, now arose. The notables were, after all, only an advising body: they could say what they deemed right to be done, but they could not do it. This was the business of the sovereign; but his edicts, in order to acquire regularly the force of law, had to be registered by the Parliament of Paris; and it is easy to understand how such a power of registration became, under particular circumstances, the power of refusal. The influence of that great magisterial corporation, called the "Parliament of Paris," had, indeed, acquired, since it had been found necessary to set aside Louis XIV.'s will by the sanction of its authority, a more clear and positive character than at former periods. This judicial court, or legislative assembly, had thus become a constituent part of the State, and had also become—as all political assemblies, however composed, which have not others for their rivals, will become—the representative of popular opinion. It had seen, with a certain degree of jealousy, the convocation, however temporarily, of another chamber (for such the assembly of notables might be called), and was, moreover, as belonging to the aristocracy, not very well disposed to the surrender of aristocratical privileges. It refused, therefore, to register the new taxes proposed to it: thus thwarting the consent of the notables, avoiding, for a time, the imposts with which its own class was threatened, and acquiring, nevertheless, some increase of popularity with the people who are usually disposed to resist all taxation, and were pleased with the invectives against the extravagance of the court, with which the resistance of the parliament was accompanied.

The government cajoled and threatened the parliament, recalled it, again quarrelled with it, attempted to suppress it—and failed.

Disturbances broke out, famine appeared at hand, a bankruptcy was imminent; there was no constituted

authority with sufficient power or sufficient confidence in itself to act decisively. People looked out for some new authority: they found it in an antique form. "The States-General!" (that is, an assembly chosen from the different classes, which, in critical periods of the French nation had been heretofore summoned) became the unanimous cry. The court, which wanted money and could not get it, expected to find more sympathy in a body drawn from all the orders of the State than from a special and privileged body which represented but one order.

The parliament, on the other hand, imagined that, having acquired the reputation of defending the nation's rights, it would have its powers maintained and extended by any collection of men representing the nation. This is why both parliament and court came by common accord to one conclusion.

The great bulk of the nobility, though divided in their previous discussions, here, also, at last agreed: one portion because it participated in the views of the court, and the other because it participated in those of the parliament.

In the meantime, the unfortunate Archbishop, who had tried every plan for filling the coffers of the court without the aid of the great council now called together, was dismissed as soon as that council was definitively summoned: and, according to the almost invariable policy of restoring to power the statesman who has increased his popularity by losing office, M. Necker was again placed at the head of the finances and presented to the public as the most influential organ of the crown.

X.

It will be apparent, from what I have said, that the court expected to find in the States-General an ally against the parliament, whilst the parliament expected to find in the States-General an ally against the court. Both were deceived.

The nobility, or notables, the government, and the parliament, had all hitherto been impotent, because they had all felt that there was another power around them

and about them, by which their actions were controlled, but with which, as it had no visible representation, they had no means of dealing.

That power was "public opinion." In the Commons of France, in the Deputies from the most numerous, thoughtful, and stirring classes of the community, a spirit —hitherto impalpable and invisible—found at once a corporate existence.

Monsieur d'Espremenil, and those parliamentary patricians who a year before were in almost open rebellion against the sovereign, at last saw that they had a more potent enemy to cope with, and rallied suddenly round the throne. Its royal possessor stood at that moment in a position which no doubt was perilous, but which, nevertheless, I believe, a moderate degree of sagacity and firmness might have made secure. The majority of the aristocracy of all grades, from a feudal sentiment of honour, was with the King. The middle classes also had still for the monarch and his rank considerable respect; and were desirous to find out and sanction some just and reasonable compromise between the institutions that were disappearing, and the ideas that had come into vogue. It was necessary to calm the apprehensions of those who had anything to lose, to fix the views of those who thought they had something to gain, and to come at once to a settlement with the various classes—here agitated by fear, there by expectation. But however evident the necessity of this policy, it was not adopted. Suspicions that should have been dissipated were excited; notions that should have been rendered definite were further disturbed; all efforts at arrangement were postponed; and thus the revolution rushed onwards, its tide swelling, and its rapidity being increased by the blunders of those who had the greatest interest and desire to arrest it. The fortune of M. de Talleyrand was embarked upon that great stream, of which few could trace the source, and none foresaw the direction.

XI.

I have just said that none foresaw the direction in which the great events now commencing were likely to run. That direction was mainly to be influenced by the conduct and character of the sovereign, but it was also, in some degree, to be affected by the conduct and character of the statesman to whom the destinies of France were for the moment confided.

M. Necker belonged to a class of men not uncommon in our own time. His abilities, though good, were not of the first order; his mind had been directed to one particular branch of business; and, as is common with persons who have no great genius and one specialty, he took the whole of government to be that part which he best understood. Accordingly, what he now looked to, and that exclusively, was balancing the receipts and expenditure of the State. To do this, it was necessary to tax the nobility and clergy; and the class through whose aid he could best hope to achieve such a task was the middle-class, or "tiers-état." For this reason, when it had been decided to convoke the States-General, and it became necessary to fix the proportionate numbers by which each of the three orders (viz. the nobility, clergy, middle-class, or "tiers-état,") which composed the States-General, was to be represented, M. Necker determined that the sole order of the "tiers-état" should have as many representatives as the two other orders conjointly; thinking in this way to give the middle-class a greater authority, and to counterbalance the want of rank in its individual members, by their aggregate superiority in numbers.

But when M. Necker went thus far he should have gone farther, and defined in what manner the three orders should vote, and what power they should separately exercise. This precaution, however, he did not take; and therefore, as soon as the States-General assembled, there instantly arose the question as to whether the three orders were to prove the validity of their elections together as members of one assembly, or separately as members of three distinct assemblies. This question, in point of fact,

determined whether the three orders were to sit and vote together, or whether each order was to sit and vote apart; and after M. Necker's first regulation it was clear that, in one case, the order of the Commons would predominate over all opposition; and that, in the other, it would be subordinate to the two rival orders. A struggle then naturally commenced.

XII.

The members of the "tiers-état," who, as the largest of the three bodies forming the States-General, had been left in possession of the chamber where all the orders had been first collected to meet the sovereign—an accident much in their favour—invited the members of the two other orders to join them there. The clergy hesitated; the nobles refused. Days and weeks passed away, and the minister, seeing his original error, would willingly have remedied it by now proposing that which he might originally have fixed, namely, that the three orders should vote together on questions of finance, and separately on all other questions. This idea was brought forward late; but, even thus late, it might have prevailed if the court had been earnest in its favour. The King, however, and those who immediately influenced him, had begun to think that a deficit was less troublesome than the means adopted to get rid of it; and fancying that the States-General, if left to themselves, might ere long dissolve amidst the dissensions which were discrediting them, were desirous that these dissensions should continue. Nor would this policy have failed in its object if negotiation had been much further prolonged.

But it is at great moments like these that a great man suddenly steps forth, and whilst the crowd is discussing what is best to be done, does it. Such a man was the Comte de Mirabeau; and on the 15th of June, this marvellous personage, whose audacity was often prudence, having instigated the Abbé Sieyès (whose authority was at that time great with the Assembly) to bring the subject under discussion, called on the tiers-état, still doubting and deliberating, to constitute themselves at once, and without further waiting for the nobility, "The Represen-

tatives of the French people." They did so in reality, though not in words, declaring themselves duly elected, and taking as their title "The National Assembly." The government thought to stop their proceedings by simply shutting up the chamber where they had hitherto met, but so paltry a device was insufficient to arrest the resolutions of men whose minds were now prepared for important events. Encouraging each other, the Commons rushed unhesitatingly to a tennis-court, and in that spot, singularly destined to witness so solemn a ceremony, swore, with but one dissentient voice, to stand by each other till France had a constitution. After such an oath, the alternative was clearly between the old monarchy, with all its abuses, and a new constitution, whatever its dangers. On this ground, two orders in the State stood hostilely confronted. But another order remained, whose conduct at such a juncture was all-decisive. That order was the clergy,—which, still respected if not venerated,—wealthy, connected by various links with each portion of society, and especially looked up to by that great and sluggish mass of quiet men who always stand long wavering between extremes—had been endeavouring to effect some compromise between the privileged classes and their opponents, but had as yet taken no prominent part with either. The moment was come at which it could no longer hesitate.

XIII.

M. de Talleyrand, though but a new dignitary in the church, was already one of its most influential members. He had been excluded by a prejudice of the nobility from the situation to which his birth had entitled him amongst them. He had long resolved to obtain another position at least as elevated through his own exertions. His views, as we have seen, at the time of his election, were liberal, though moderate, whilst he was sufficiently acquainted with the character of Louis XVI. to know that that monarch would never sincerely yield, nor ever sturdily resist, any concession demanded with persistency. Partly, therefore, from a conviction that he was doing what was best for the public, and partly, also, from the persuasion

that he was doing what was best for himself, he separated boldly from the rest of his family (who were amongst the most devoted to the Comte d'Artois and Marie-Antoinette), and laboured with unwearied energy to enlist the body he belonged to on the popular side.

To succeed in this object he had the talents and advantages most essential. His natural courtesy flattered the curates; his various acquirements captivated his more learned brethren; his high birth gave him the ear of the great ecclesiastical dignitaries; and, finally, a majority of his order, instigated by his exertions and address, joined the Third Estate, on the 22nd of June, in the Church of Saint-Louis.

From that moment the question hitherto doubtful was determined; for at no time have the clergy and the commons stood side by side without being victorious. It was in vain, therefore, that even so early as the day following, the descendant of Louis XIV., in all the pomp of royalty, and in the presence of the three orders—whom he had for that day summoned to assemble—denounced the conduct which the tiers-état had pursued, annulled their decisions, and threatened them with his sovereign displeasure.

The tiers-état resisted; the King repented—retracted,—and showing that he had no will, lost all authority. Thus, on the 27th of June, the States-General, henceforth designated by the title which had been already assumed by the Commons (the National Assembly), held their deliberations together, and the three orders were confounded.

XIV.

But one step now remained in order to legalise the revolution in progress. Each deputy had received a sort of mandate or instruction from those who named him at the moment of his election. Such instructions or mandates, which had been given at a time when people could hardly anticipate the state of things which had since arisen, limited, or seemed to limit, the action of a deputy to particular points which had especially attracted the attention of his constituents.

The conservative party contended that these mandates were imperative, the liberal party that they were not. According to the first supposition, the States-General could do no more than redress a few grievances; according to the other, they could create a perfectly new system of government.

The Bishop of Autun, in the first speech he delivered in the National Assembly—a speech which produced considerable effect—argued in favour of his own liberty and that of his colleagues, and his views were naturally enough adopted by a body which, feeling its own force, had to determine its own power. Hence, on the record of two great decisions—the one solving the States-General into the "National Assembly;" the other extending and fixing that Assembly's authority—decisions which, whatever their other results, were at least fatal to the power and influence of the class to which he belonged by birth, but from which he had, in spite of himself, been severed in childhood—was indelibly inscribed the name of the once despised and still disinherited cripple of the princely house of Périgord.

XV.

There was nothing henceforth to impede the labours of the National Assembly, and it commenced those labours with earnestness and zeal, if not with discretion. One of its first acts was to choose by ballot a committee of eight members, charged to draw up the project of a constitution, which was subsequently to be submitted to the Assembly. The Bishop of Autun was immediately placed upon this select and important committee. It had for its task to render practical the political speculations of the eighteenth century. Things, however, had commenced too violently for them to proceed thus peaceably; and as the success of the popular party had been hitherto obtained by braving the crown, it was to be expected that the crown would seize the first opportunity that presented itself for boldly recovering its authority. A well-timed effort of this kind might have been successful. But neither Louis XVI., nor any of the counsellors in whom he confided, possessed that instinct in political affairs which is the soul of action,

inspiring men with the resolve to do the right thing at the right moment. It has often been found easy to crush a revolution at its commencement, for the most ardent of its supporters at such a time act feebly, and doubt about the policy they are pursuing. It has often been found possible to arrest a revolution at that subsequent stage of its progress when the moderate are shocked by some excess, or the sanguine checked by some disappointment; but a revolution is invincible at that crisis, when its progress, begun with boldness, has neither been checked by misfortune, nor disgraced by violence.

Nevertheless, it was just at such a crisis that the unfortunate Louis XVI., guided in a great degree by the fatal influence of his brother, after having gradually surrounded Versailles and the capital with troops, suddenly banished M. Necker (July 10th), whose disgrace was instantly considered the defeat of those who advised the King to renovate his authority by concessions, and the triumph of those who counselled him to recover and re-establish it by force. But the measures which were to follow this act were still in suspense, when a formidable insurrection broke out at Paris. A portion of the soldiery sided with the people. The Bastille was taken, and its commandant put to death, the populace got possession of arms, the prevôt or mayor of the city was assassinated, whilst the army which had been so ostentatiously collected in the Champ de Mars and at St. Denis was left an inactive witness of the insurrection which its array had provoked. The results were those which usually follow the strong acts of weak men: Louis XVI. submitted; M. Necker was recalled; the Comte d'Artois emigrated.

It was M. de Talleyrand's fortune not merely at all times to quit a falling party at the commencement of its decline, but to stand firm by a rising party at the moment of its struggle for success. This was seen during the contest we have just been describing. Throughout that contest the Bishop of Autun was amongst the most determined for maintaining the rights of the nation against the designs of the court. His decision and courage added not a little to the reputation which had

been already gained by his ability. We find his name, therefore, first in the list of a small number of eminent men,* whom the Assembly, when surrounded by hostile preparations for restoring the despotism which had been abolished, charged, in a bold but not imprudent spirit of defiance, with the task of at once completing and establishing the constitution which had been promised, and which it had become evident there was no intention to accord. The labour of these statesmen, however, was not easy, even after their cause was triumphant, for political victories often leave the conquerors—in the excess of their own passions, and the exaggeration of their own principles—worse enemies than those whom they have vanquished. Such was the case now.

XVI.

In the exultation of the moment all moderate notions were laid aside, and succeeded by a blind excitement in favour of the most sweeping changes. Nor was this excitement the mere desire of vulgar and selfish interest stirring the minds of those who hoped to better their own condition: nobler and loftier emotions lit up the breasts of men who had only sacrifices to make with a generous enthusiasm. "Nos âmes," says the elder Ségur, "étaient alors enivrées d'une douce philanthropie, qui nous portait à chercher avec passion les moyens d'être utiles à l'humanité, et de rendre le sort des hommes plus heureux."† On the 4th of August, "a day memorable with one party," observes M. Mignet, "as the St. Bartholomew of property, and with the other as the St. Bartholomew of abuses,"—personal service, feudal obligations, pecuniary immunities, trade corporations, seignorial privileges, and courts of law,—all municipal and provincial rights,—the whole system of judicature,—based on the purchase and sale of judicial charges, and which, singular to state, had, however absurd in theory, hitherto produced in practice

* Evêque d'Autun, archévêque de Bordeaux, Lally, Clermont-Tonnerre, Mounier, Sieyès, &c., &c.

† "Our souls were then intoxicated by a gentle philanthropy, which indueed us to seek passionately the means of being useful to humanity, and of rendering the condition of man more happy."

learned, able, and independent magistrates,—in short, almost all the institutions and peculiarities which constituted the framework of government and society throughout France, were unhesitatingly swept away, at the instigation and demand of the first magistrates and nobles of the land, who did not sufficiently consider that they who destroy at once all existing laws (whatever those laws may be), destroy at the same time all established habits of thought;—that is, all customs of obedience, all spontaneous feelings of respect and affection, without which a form of government is merely an idea on paper.

In after times, M. de Talleyrand, when speaking of this period, said, in one of his characteristic phrases, "*La Révolution a désossé la France.*" But it is easier to be a witty critic of by-gone history, than a cool and impartial actor in passing events; and at the time to which I am alluding the Bishop of Autun was, undoubtedly, amongst the foremost in destroying the traditions which constitute a community, and proclaiming the theories which captivate a mob. The wholesale abolition of institutions, which must have had something worth preserving or they would never have produced a great and polished society honourably anxious to reform its own defects, was sanctioned by his vote; and the "rights of man," the acknowledgment of which did so little to secure the property or life of the citizen, were proclaimed in the words that he suggested.

It is difficult to conceive how so cool and sagacious a statesman could have imagined that an old society was to be well governed by entirely new laws, or that practical liberty could be founded on a declaration of abstract principles. A sane mind, however, does not always escape an epidemic folly; any more than a sound body escapes an epidemic disease. Moreover, in times when to censure unnecessary changes is to pass for being the patron, and often in reality to be the supporter, of inveterate abuses, no one carries out, or can hope to carry out, precisely his own ideas. Men act in masses: the onward pressure of one party is regulated by the opposing resistance of another: to pursue a policy, it may be expedient for

those who do not feel, to feign, a passion; and a wise man may excuse his participation in an absurd enthusiasm by observing it was the only means to vanquish still more absurd prejudices.

Still, if M. de Talleyrand was at this moment an exaggerated reformer, he at least did not exhibit one frequent characteristic of exaggerated reformers, by being so wholly occupied in establishing some delusive scheme of future perfection, as to despise the present absolute necessities. He saw from the first that, if the new organization of the State was really to be effected, it could only be so by re-establishing confidence in its resources, and that a national bankruptcy would be a social dissolution. When, therefore, M. Necker (on the 25th of August) presented to the Assembly a memoir on the situation of the finances, asking for a loan of eighty millions of francs, the Bishop of Autun supported this loan without hesitation; demonstrating the importance of sustaining the public credit; and shortly afterwards (in September), when the loan thus granted was found insufficient to satisfy the obligations of the State, he again aided the minister in obtaining from the Assembly a tax of twenty-five per cent. on the income of every individual throughout France. A greater national sacrifice has rarely been made in a moment of national distress, and has never been made for a more honourable object. It is impossible, indeed, not to feel an interest in the exertions of men animated, amidst all their errors, by so noble a spirit, and not to regret that with aspirations so elevated, and abilities so distinguished, they should have failed so deplorably in their efforts to unite liberty with order—vigour with moderation.

But Providence seems to have prescribed as an almost universal rule that everything which is to have a long duration must be of slow growth. Nor is this all: we must expect that, in times of revolution, contending parties will constantly be hurried into collisions contrary to their reason, and fatal to their interests, but inevitably suggested by their anger or suspicions. Hence the wisest intentions are at the mercy of the most foolish incidents. Such an incident now occurred.

A military festival at Versailles, which the royal family imprudently attended, and in which it perhaps idly delighted to excite a profitless enthusiasm amongst its guards and adherents, alarmed the multitude at Paris, already irritated by an increasing scarcity of food, and dreading an appeal to the army on the part of the sovereign, as the sovereign dreaded an appeal to the people on the part of the popular leaders. The men of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, and the women of the market-place, either impelled by their own pressing wants and indefinite fears, or guided (as it was then—I believe falsely—reported) by the secret influence of the Duc d'Orléans, were soon seen pouring from the dark corners of the capital, and covering the broad and stately road which leads to the long-venerated palace, where, since the time of the "Great Monarch," his descendants had held their court. In the midst of an accidental tumult, this lawless rabble entered the royal residence, massacreing its defenders.

The King was rescued from actual violence, though not from insult, and escorted with a sort of decorum to the Tuileries, which he henceforth inhabited, nominally as the supreme magistrate of the State, but in reality as a prisoner. The National Assembly followed him to Paris.

XVII.

The events of which I have been speaking took place on the 5th and 6th of October; and were, to the advocates of constitutional monarchy, what the previous insurrection, in July, had been to the advocates of absolute power. Moderate men began to fear that it was no longer possible to ally the dignity and independence of the crown with the rights and liberties of the people: and MM. Mounier and Lally-Tollendal, considered the leaders of that party which from the first had declared the desire to establish in France a mixed constitutional government, similar to that which prevailed in England—disheartened and disgusted—quitted the Assembly. Hitherto, M. de Talleyrand had appeared disposed to act with these statesmen, but he did not now imitate their conduct: on the contrary, it was precisely at the moment when they

separated themselves from the Revolution, that he brought forward a motion which connected him irrevocably with it.

Had affairs worn a different aspect, it is probable that he would not have compromised himself so decidedly in favour of a scheme which was certain to encounter a determined and violent opposition: still it is but just to observe that his conduct in this instance was in perfect conformity with the course he had previously pursued, and the sentiments he had previously expressed, both with respect to the exigencies of the State and the property of the Church. I have shown, indeed, the interest he had manifested in maintaining the public credit, first by supporting a loan of eighty millions of francs, and secondly by voting a property tax of twenty-five per cent. But the one had proved merely a temporary relief, and the other had not given an adequate return; for, as the whole administration of the country had been disorganized, so the collection of taxes was precarious and difficult. Some new resource had to be sought for. There was but one left. The clergy had already resigned their tithes, which at first had only been declared purchasable, and had also given up their plate. When M. de Juisné, Archbishop of Paris, made the two first donations in the name of his brethren, he had been seconded by the Bishop of Autun; and it was the Bishop of Autun who now proposed (on the 10th of October) that all that remained to the clergy —their land—should, on certain conditions, be placed at the disposal of the nation.

XVIII.

M. Pozzo di Borgo, a man in no wise inferior to M. de Talleyrand, though somewhat jealous of him, once said to me, "Cet homme s'est fait grand en se rangeant toujours parmi les petits, et en aidant ceux qui avaient le plus besoin de lui."*

The propensity which M. Pozzo di Borgo somewhat bitterly but not inaccurately described, and which perhaps

* "This man has made himself great by placing himself always by the side of the little, and aiding those who most needed him."

was in a certain degree the consequence of that nice perception of his own interests which guided the person whom I designate as "politic" through life almost like an instinct, was especially visible in the present instance. No one can doubt that, at the moment when every other institution was overturned in France, a great change in the condition of the French church, against which the spirit of the eighteenth century had been particularly directed, was an event not to be avoided. Alone amidst the general prodigality, this corporation by its peculiar condition had been able to preserve all its wealth, whilst it had lost almost all its power.

The feeble and the rich in times of commotion are the natural prey of the strong and the needy; and, therefore, directly the nation commenced a revolution to avoid a bankruptcy, the ecclesiastical property was pretty sure, a little sooner or a little later, to be appropriated to the public exigencies. Such an appropriation, nevertheless, was not without difficulties; and what the laity most wanted was a churchman of position and consideration who would sanction a plan for surrendering the property of the church. The opinions expressed by a man of so high a rank amongst the nobility and the clergy as the Bishop of Autun, were therefore of considerable importance, and likely to give him --those opinions being popular--an important position, which was almost certain (M. Necker's influence being already undermined) to lead—should a new ministry be formed on the liberal side—to office. Mirabeau, in fact, in a note written in October, which proposes a new ministerial combination, leaves M. Necker as the nominal head of the government "in order to discredit him," proposes himself as a member of the royal council without a department, and gives the post of minister of finance to the Bishop of Autun, saying, "His motion on the clergy has won him that place."*

The argument with which the Bishop introduced the motion here alluded to has been so often repeated since the period to which I am referring, and has so influenced the condition of the clergy throughout a great portion of

* "La motion du clergé lui a conquis cette place."—*Correspondance de Mirabeau et le Comte de la March.*

Europe, that it cannot be read without interest. "The State," said M. de Talleyrand, "has been for a long time struggling with the most urgent wants. This is known to all of us. Some adequate means must be found to supply those wants. All ordinary sources are exhausted. The people are ground down. The slightest additional impost would be justly insupportable to them. Such a thing is not to be thought of. Extraordinary means for supplying the necessities of the State have been resorted to: but these were destined to the extraordinary wants of this year. Extraordinary resources of some kind are now wanted for the future; without them, order cannot be established. There is one such resource, immense and decisive: and which, in my opinion (or otherwise I should reject it), can be made compatible with the strictest respect for property. I mean the landed estate of the church.

* * * * *

"Already a great operation with regard to this estate is inevitable, in order to provide suitably for those whom the relinquishment of tithes has left destitute.

* * * * *

"I think it unnecessary to discuss at length the question of church property. What appears to me certain is, that the clergy is not a proprietor like other proprietors, inasmuch as that the property which it enjoys (and of which it cannot dispose) was given to it—not for its own benefit, but for the performance of duties which are to benefit the community. What appears to me also certain is, that the nation, exercising an almost unlimited power over all the bodies within its bosom, possesses—not the right to destroy the whole body of the clergy, because that body is required for the service of religion—but the right to destroy any particular aggregations of such body whenever they are either prejudicial or simply useless; and if the State possesses this right over the existence of prejudicial or useless aggregations of the clergy, it evidently possesses a similar right over the property of such aggregations.

"It appears to me also clear that as the nation is bound to see that the purpose for which foundations or endow-

ments were made is fulfilled, and that those who endowed the church meant that the clergy should perform certain functions: so, if there be any benefices where such functions are not performed, the nation has a right to suppress those benefices, and to grant the funds, therefrom derived, to any members of the clergy who can employ them according to the object with which they were given.

* * * * *

"But although it is just to destroy aggregations of the clergy which are either prejudicial or useless, and to confiscate their property—although it is just to suppress benefices which are no longer useful for the object for which such benefices were endowed—is it just to confiscate or reduce the revenue of those dignitaries and members of the church, who are now actually living and performing the services which belong to their sacred calling?

* * * * *

"For my own part, I confess the arguments employed to support the contrary opinion appear to me to admit of several answers. I shall submit one very simple answer to the Assembly.

"However the possession of a property may be guaranteed and made inviolable by law, it is evident that the law cannot change the nature of such property in guaranteeing it.

"Thus, in a question of ecclesiastical property, it can only assure to each titulary the enjoyment of the actual donation of the founder. But every one is aware that, according to the titles of church property, as well as according to the various laws of the church, which explain the spirit and meaning of these titles, the only part of church property to which the ecclesiastic has any individual right is that necessary for his honest subsistence: the remainder has to be applied to the relief of the poor, or to the maintenance of places of worship. If then the nation assures to the holder of a benefice, whatever that benefice may be, his necessary subsistence, it does not violate his individual property; and if at the same time that it takes possession of that portion of his revenue

which is not required for his subsistence, it assumes the other obligations attached to the benefice in question, such as the maintenance of hospitals, the performance of works of charity, the repairing of churches, the expenses of public education, &c.; and, above all. if it does this in a moment of general distress, I cannot but believe that the intentions of the donors will be fully carried out, and that justice will still be maintained.

"I think, then, that the nation in a period of general distress may appropriate the property of those religious establishments which it deems it necessary to suppress, by securing to their dependants their necessary subsistence; that it may also profit by all benefices to which no duties are attached, and assure to itself the reversion of all such benefices as may hereafter fall into that condition; and lastly, that it may reduce all extravagant salaries now enjoyed by the clergy if it take to itself all the obligations —apart from the decent maintenance of the clergy— which originally attached to church property according to the founder's bequest. Such are the principles according to which the State may, in my opinion, legitimately appropriate the whole of the ecclesiastical property, on assuring to the clergy therefrom what would be sufficient for their decent support."

* * * * *

XIX.

Thus M. de Talleyrand contended:—

1st. That the members of the clergy were not like other proprietors, inasmuch as they held their property not for their own enjoyment but for the performance of certain duties, and that it was only intended that they should have out of the proceeds of that property a decent subsistence, the residue being destined for the support of the poor and the maintenance of religious edifices.

2nd. That the State could alter the distribution of church property, or rather the payment of the clergy, and also totally suppress such ecclesiastical institutions as it deemed injurious or not requisite; as well as such useless benefices as were then vacant, or might become

vacant; and, as a matter of course, employ the revenue which was thereto attached, in the manner which might seem best adapted to the general advantage.

3rd. That in a moment of great and national distress it might altogether take possession of the whole property held by the clergy, and appropriate the same to public purposes; if at the same time it took upon itself those charges with which the clergy were intrusted, and also provided for the clergy themselves a fixed and adequate support. He did not, however, propose, as some may have idly imagined, and have unjustly stated, to reduce his order to a state of indigence; on the contrary, presuming the revenue of the church property, including the tithes (which he would still have had collected as national revenue), to be about a hundred and fifty millions of francs, he advised the government to make a yearly grant of no less than a hundred millions—never to be reduced below eighty-five millions—for the support of the clergy, no member of it receiving less than twelve hundred francs, to which was added a dwelling; and when we consider that the tithes having been surrendered, the ecclesiastical revenue was at that time reduced to seventy-five millions, the rent of the land; and when we consider also that the ecclesiastical budget, including the payment of all religions, has never, since that period, amounted to the sum which M. de Talleyrand was disposed to allow, I think it must be acknowledged that the proposals I have been describing, looking at all the difficulties of the times, were not to be despised, and that the French clergy would have acted more prudently if they had at once accepted them, although it must be confessed that any bargain made in changeful times between a power which is sinking in the State and a power which is rising, is rarely kept faithfully by the latter.

But the clergy, at all events, and the high clergy especially, would not accept this bargain. They complained not so much of the insufficiency of the provision which was to be made for them, as of the grievance of having an income as proprietors changed into a salary as functionaries. They contended, in short, that they were

proprietors like other proprietors, and that the Bishop of Autun had misstated their case and justified their robbery.

In this state of things—whatever the real nature of the title under which the church held its possessions—whatever the imprudence of the clergy themselves in resisting the compromise that was proposed to them as an equivalent for the surrender of those possessions—it was impossible forcibly to confiscate a property which a great corporation had held indisputedly for ages and which it declared itself unwilling to resign, without weakening the respect for property in general, and weakening also, by the questions and discussions to which such a measure was certain to give rise, the respect for religion: thus enfeebling and undermining—at a moment when (amidst the falling ruins of an old government and society) it was most essential to strengthen and preserve—those foundations on which every society that pretends to be civilized, and every government that intends to be honest, has to establish its existence.

"The wise," says a great reformer, "should be cautious about making great changes when the foolish are clamorous for dangerous innovations." But although the maxim may be a good one, I suspect that it is more likely to be professed by the speculative philosopher than followed by the ambitious statesman.

There are, in fact, moments in the history of nations when certain events are, by the multiplied force of converging circumstances, inevitably foredoomed; and in such moments, whilst the ignorant man is obstinate, the proud man firm, the religious man resigned, the "*politic* man" accommodates himself to fate, and only attempts to mix up as much good as he can with the evil which has to be accepted.

It is easy to conceive, therefore, that when M. de Talleyrand proposed the appropriation of the church property by the State, he did so because he saw that at all events it would be appropriated; because he thought that he might as well obtain the popularity which was to be got by the proposition; and likewise because he could thus bargain for such conditions as, if they had been frankly

accepted by one party and fairly carried out by the other, would have secured an honourable existence to the clergy and an immense relief to the State. I say an immense relief to the State, since, according to the calculations which the Bishop of Autun submitted to the Assembly—and these seem to have been made with consideration—had the immense property, valued at two milliards of francs, been properly sold, and the proceeds properly applied, these, by paying off money borrowed at enormous interest and life annuities which were granted at an extravagant loss, might with tolerable economy have converted a deficit of some millions of francs into a surplus of about the same amount.

But it happened at this time, as it not unfrequently happens when passion and prudence unite in some great enterprise, the part which passion counselled was consummated completely and at once; the part which prudence suggested was transformed and spoilt in the execution. To this subject I shall by-and-by have to return.

XX.

The motion of M. de Talleyrand with respect to the property of the church was carried on the 2nd of November, 1789, after some stormy debates; and the party he had defeated now classed him amongst its bitterest opponents. But, on the 4th of December, he gained more than a party triumph by the singular lucidity with which, on the question of establishing a bank at Paris and restoring order generally to the French finances, he explained the principles of banking and public credit, which the public at that time enveloped in the mystery with which ignorance surrounds those subjects which are detailed in figures, and involve such vast interests as the resources and necessities of a nation.

The admirable talent which M. de Talleyrand displayed on this occasion consisted in rendering clear what appeared obscure, and simple what seemed abstract. After showing that a bank could only exist with benefit to itself and to others by its credit—and that this credit could not be the effect of a paper money with a forced currency, on which

some persons were disposed to form one, inasmuch as that a currency which was forced was nothing more or less than an exhibition of the insolvency of the institution which it was intended to protect—he turned to the general condition and credit of the State, and said: "The time, gentlemen, is gone by for complicated fiscal plans, learnedly and artfully combined, which are merely invented to delay by temporary resources the crisis which is inevitably arriving. All the contrivances of wit and cunning are exhausted. For the future, honesty must replace genius. Side by side with the evidence of our calamities must be placed the evidence of their remedy. All must be reduced to the simplicity of an account-book—drawn up by good sense, kept by good faith."

This speech obtained for its author general encomiums: it was praised in the boudoir of the fine lady, for the elegance of its style; in the country house of the banker, for the soundness of its views; even the Faubourg St. Germain acknowledged that M. de Talleyrand, though a *scélérat* (a rascal), was a statesman, and that in those iniquitous times a *scélérat*, a man of quality, and a statesman, might be useful to his country. Such universal popularity did not last long. In the following month (January 31, 1790), the liberal bishop declared himself in favour of conferring upon a Jew the rights of a French citizen. This opinion—considered by many as a double outrage against the distinctions hitherto maintained between castes and between creeds—admitted of no pardon from a large portion of that society which M. de Talleyrand had formerly frequented; and I have read, in some tale of the time, that the Marquis de Travanet, a famous player of "tric-trac," used subsequently to say, in making what is called "*la case du diable*," "*je fais la case de l'évêque d'Autun.*"

A man's reputation, however, when parties run high, is not unfrequently made by his opponents; and the name of M. de Talleyrand now rose in the country and the Assembly just in proportion as it sank in the circles of the court and amongst the extreme partisans of priestly intolerance and royal prerogative.

Few persons had, in fact, rendered such important services to the cause which he had espoused. To his endeavours, as we have seen, it was mainly owing that the clergy joined the commons in the church of St. Louis, and thus constituted the States-General. Shortly afterwards, by contending against the imperative nature of those orders which the members of the States-General had received from their constituents, he had aided in no small degree in releasing the National Assembly from the instructions which would otherwise have fettered its progress. Elected a member of the committee, appointed to prepare the new constitution which was to be given to France, his labours had been amongst the most valuable of that body, and the future rights of Frenchmen had been proclaimed in the words which he had suggested as most appropriate. Evincing on all questions of finance that knowledge of principles which produces clearness of statement, he had ably assisted M. Necker in the measures by which that statesman had sought to reassure public credit and raise the revenue; and, finally, he had delivered up the wealth and power of his own order, as a sacrifice (such, at least, was his pretension) to the public weal.

The part which he had taken in the proceedings of the Assembly was, indeed, so considerable, that it was thought that no one could be better qualified to explain and defend its conduct. With such an explanation or defence he was charged; and he executed his task in a sort of memoir or manifesto to the French nation. This manifesto was read in the National Assembly on the 10th of February, 1790, and subsequently published and circulated throughout France. It has long since been forgotten amongst the many papers of a similar kind which have marked and justified the successive changes that France has for the last eighty years undergone.

But the skill and address of its composition was the subject of universal praise at the time of its appearance, and it still remains a remarkable exhibition of the ideas, and a skilful and able attempt to vindicate the actions, of an epoch which is yet awaiting the final judgment of posterity.

XXI.

The memoir or manifesto, to which I have been alluding, announced the abolition of privileges, the reform of the church, the institution of a representative chamber and a citizen guard; and promised a new system of taxation, and a general plan of education. It was read, as I have said, on the 10th of February, in the National Assembly, and on the 16th of the same month its author was named president of that assembly* by a majority of three hundred and seventy-five votes to one hundred and twenty-five, although the Abbé Sieyès—no mean rival—was his competitor.

This honour received additional solidity from a most able report in favour of the uniformity of weights and measures, which M. de Talleyrand made to the Assembly on the 30th April, 1790: a report which, carrying out the idea that Turgot had been anxious to establish, and furnishing a method for destroying the inconvenient distinctions which separated province from province, laid the foundation for that uniform system which now prevails throughout the French dominions. Nor would M. de Talleyrand have applied this project merely to France; he at the same time suggested that commissions from the Academy of Sciences in Paris and the Royal Society in London should be appointed to fix on some natural unity for measure and weight, which should be alike applicable to England and France. "*Chacune des deux nations,*" he added, "*formerait sur cette mesure ses étalons, qu'elle conserverait avec le plus grand soin, de telle sorte que si, au bout de plusieurs siècles, on s'apercevait, de quelque variation dans l'année sidérale, les étalons pussent servir à l'évaluer, et par là à lier ce point important du système du monde à une grande époque—celle de l'Assemblée Nationale. Peut-être même est-il permis de voir dans ce concours de deux nations interrogeant ensemble la nature,*

* The presidency was only for fifteen days; but the consideration in which this dignity was held may be estimated by the fact that Mirabeau, notwithstanding his utmost efforts, was unable to obtain it until the subsequent year.

pour en obtenir un résultat important, le principe d'une union politique, operée par l'entremise des sciences."*

It is impossible not to sympathise with a conception at once so elevated and so practical as that which is here expressed; and rejoice at thus finding an example of what Bacon—himself no less a statesman than a philosopher—claims as the attribute of men of science and letters, viz.: that when they do give themselves up to public affairs, they carry thereunto a spirit more lofty and comprehensive than that which animates the mere politician.

The greater part of the work which the Assembly had proposed to itself, was now terminated. The old monarchy and aristocracy were destroyed; the new powers of the crown and the people were defined; the new divisions of the country into departments, districts, and communes, were marked out; the new organisation of the tribunals of justice was decreed. No one entirely approved of the constitution thus to be created, but there was an almost universal satisfaction at its being so nearly completed.

* "Each of the two nations should by this means form its standards, which it ought to preserve with the greatest care, so that if, at the end of several centuries, any variation in the sidereal year should be perceived, the standards might serve to ascertain its extent, and in this way to connect this important point in the system of the universe with a mighty epoch, such as that of the National Assembly. Perhaps, even we may be permitted to foresee in this co-operation of two nations, together interrogating nature to obtain from her an important solution, the principle of a political union brought about by the intervention of the sciences."

Part II.

FROM THE FESTIVAL OF THE 14TH OF JULY TO THE CLOSE OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

Blesses the standard of France at festival of the 14th of July.—Increasing financial distress.—M. de Talleyrand's views.—Civil constitution of the clergy.—M. de Talleyrand's conduct.—Refuses archbishopric of Paris.—Letter to editors of Chronicle.—Mirabeau's death.—Sketch of his career, and relations with M. de Talleyrand, who attends his death-bed.—Probabilities as to his having initiated M. de Talleyrand into plots of court.—Leaves M. de Talleyrand his intended speech on the law of succession, which regulated the present state of the law in France, and which M. de Talleyrand read in the National Assembly.—M. de Talleyrand suspended from his episcopal functions, and quits the Church.—The King's flight.—Conduct and views of M. de Talleyrand.—Wishes to aid the King.—Foolish conduct of court party.—Fatal decree of National Assembly, forbidding the re-election of its members.—M. de Talleyrand's project of education.—Assembly closes the 13th of September, 1791.—M. de Talleyrand goes to England, January 1792.

I.

We are arrived at the festival of the 14th of July, held to celebrate the destruction of the Bastille, and to do honour to the new government which had risen on its ruins: let us pause for a moment on that day of joy!

An immense and magnificent amphitheatre is erected on the Champ de Mars: there the hereditary sovereign of France, and the temporary president of an elected assembly —the joint symbols of two ideas and of two epochs—are seated on two equal thrones, resplendent with the arms which the nation has taken from its ancient kings; and there is the infant prince, on whom an exulting people look kindly as the inheritor of his father's engagements, and who is to perpetuate the race of Saint Louis: and there is that queen, "decorating and cheering the sphere she moves in, glittering like the morning star, full

of life, and splendour, and joy;" and there that royal maiden, beauteous with the charms of the palace, blessed with the virtues of the cloister—a princess, a saint—destined to be a martyr! And there is the vain but honest Lafayette, leaning on his citizen sword: and there the terrible Mirabeau—his long hair streaming to the wind: and there that well-known and still memorable Assembly, prematurely proud of its vaunted work, which, alas! like the spectacle we are assisting at, is to be the mere pageant of a day. And, behold, in yonder balcony, the most graceful and splendid court in Europe, for such even at that time was still the court of France; and lo! in the open space, yon confederated bands, bearing their respective banners, and representing every portion of that great family which at this moment is rejoicing over the triumph it has achieved. On a sudden the sky—the light of which mingles so well with the joy of men, but which had hitherto been dark and sullen—on a sudden the sky clears up, and the sun blends his pomp with that of this noble ceremony! And now, robed in his pontifical garments, and standing on an altar thronged by three hundred priests, in long white robes and tricoloured girdles, the Bishop of Autun blesses the great standard, the oriflamme of France, no longer the ensign of war, but the sign and token of peace between the past and the future—between the old recollections and the new aspirations of the French people.

Who, that had been present that day in Paris, could have believed that those who wept tenderly with the children of Bearne, at the foot of the statue of Henry IV., would so soon laugh horribly round the scaffold of his descendant? that the gay multitude, wandering in the Champs Elysées, amidst garlands of light, and breathing sounds of gentle happiness and affection, would so soon be the ferocious mob, massacreing in the prisons, murdering in the public streets, dancing round the guillotine dripping with innocent blood? that the monarch, the court, the deputies, every popular and princely image of this august pageant, the very forms of the religion with which it was consecrated, would in two or three brief years be scoffingly

cast away: and that even the high priest of that gorgeous solemnity, no longer attached to his sacred calling, would be wandering a miserable exile on foreign shores, banished as a traitor to the liberty for which he had sacrificed the prejudices of his caste, the predilections of his family, the honours and wealth of his profession?

II.

From the 14th of July, 1789, to the 14th of July, 1790, the scenes which were comprehended in this, which may be called the first act in the great drama then agitating France, were upon the whole such as rather to excite the hopes than the fears of mankind; but from the latter period the aspect of things greatly changed, and almost each day became marked by some disappointment as to the success of a favourite scheme, or the fortune of a popular statesman.

On the 4th of September, 1790, M. Necker left almost unnoticed, and altogether unregretted, that Paris to which but a year before he had returned amidst unanimous acclamation. About the same time, Mirabeau began to be suspected; and the shouts of "Vive Lafayette!" were not unfrequently changed into "à bas Lafayette!"* by the ever fickle multitude. At this period also it became apparent that the sale of the church property, which, properly managed, might have restored order to the finances, was likely, on the contrary, to render the national bankruptcy more complete.

In order to give a just idea of the conduct of M. de Talleyrand, it is necessary that I should explain rapidly how this calamity occurred. The Assembly, desiring to secure the irrevocability of its decrees by disposing as soon as possible of the vast estate which it had declared was to be sold, and desiring also to increase its financial resources without delay, looked out for some means by which this double end could be accomplished. After two or three

* "La popularité de M. de Lafayette qui s'était élevée si haut commençait à décliner de ce jour là (14 July): un mois plus tard, les cris 'à bas Lafayette!' avaient succédé aux cris de 'Vive Lafayette!'"—(*Comte de la Marck.*)

projects, for a moment taken up and then abandoned, the idea finally adopted was that of issuing State notes, representing a certain value of national property, and giving them a forced currency, so that they would have an immediate value independent of that which they acquired as the representatives of property.

These notes or bonds, in short, thus became money; and they had this advantage over ordinary paper money, that they represented something which had a positive value; and as the first issue of four hundred millions of francs took place at a time when some substitute was really required for the coin which every one, from alarm and want of confidence, had then begun to hoard, its effects were rather beneficial than the reverse. The Assembly instantly thought it had an inexhaustible fund at its disposal; consequently a new issue of eight hundred million bonds followed shortly after the first issue of four hundred millions, as a matter of course; and it became evident that this mode of meeting the current wants of the State was to be adopted to a greater and greater extent, thereby increasing the currency in a manner not in any way called for by the increased wealth or business of the community, and altering the value of money in all the transactions of life. M. de Talleyrand at once foresaw the evils to which this system would naturally lead; and saying, "*Je serais inconsolable si de la rigueur de nos décrets sur le clergé il ne résultait pas le salut de la chose publique,*"* demonstrated, with a singular clearness and sagacity, that the course on which the Assembly had entered must inevitably cause the total disappearance of bullion, an enormous rise in provisions, a daily depreciation of State paper and of land (such State paper representing land), a rapid variation of exchanges, an impossibility of all regular commerce.

But men in desperate times disregard ultimate results. The Assembly wanted funds at the moment: forced assignats created those funds; and when Mirabeau

* "I should be inconsolable if the severity of our decrees as to the clergy should not produce as its result the salvation of the State."—See *Appendix*.

shrewdly observed that to multiply assignats was, at all events, to multiply the opponents to reaction, since no man who had an assignat could wish the property on which its value depended to be restored to its former possessors, this political argument settled the financial one.

III.

The great characteristic of modern legislation is the principle of representation by election. It by no means follows, however, that because it has been an invaluable discovery to make a portion of government depend upon a particular principle, that every portion of a government should be deduced from that principle. On the contrary, the mobility given to a government by any system that introduces into it the popular passions and variations of opinion, requires some counteracting element of fixity and stability to give permanence to its duration, and steadiness to its action. But the National Assembly—like those invalids who, having found a remedy for their disease, fancy that if a little of such remedy does some good, a great deal must do much more—made the whole of their institutions, with one exception, depend upon the same basis; and as their chamber was elective, their municipalities elective—so their judges were to be elective, and their clergy and bishops elective also.

Here commenced the first serious schism in the nation, for that which had hitherto existed had been between the nation and the court. I have said that the clergy, and more especially the higher clergy, had not willingly abandoned the property which they had been accustomed to consider theirs. This loss, however, furnished them with but a worldly cause of feud; it neither affected their consciences, nor the consciences of their flocks. But the new regulations, whatever their intrinsic merits, entirely changed the existing condition of the Roman church, and struck at the root of its discipline. These regulations, consequently, were denounced by the Pope, and could not be solemnly accepted by the more zealous of the priesthood.

In such circumstances it would have been far wiser to

have left the spiritual condition of the clergy untouched. To oblige all ecclesiastics either to give up their benefices, or to swear to uphold the "Civil Constitution of the Clergy" (such being the title given to the new system), was to provoke many who might otherwise have been silent to declare hostility to the Revolution; and at the same time gave to the Revolution itself that persecuting bias by which it was finally disgraced and ruined. Such a measure, besides, divided the clergy into two classes—one of which excited the veneration of the people by its sacrifices, and the indignation of the government by its complaints: the other satisfied the government by its obedience, but lost the respect of the people by its servility. A Catholic clergy disowned by the Pope was useless to those professing the Catholic religion; no clergy at all was wanted for those who professed no religion whatsoever. The course which M. de Talleyrand observed in this business was wary and cautious up to the moment at which it was bold and decided.

The Assembly had determined upon the "Civil Constitution of the Clergy," prior to the 14th of July. The King, however, had requested a delay, with the intention of referring to Rome, and the law did not finally pass the Legislature till the 27th of November.

The struggle during this period was between the Sovereign and the Pope on the one side, and the philosophers and the church reformers—for both took a part in the matter—on the other.

It was disagreeable for a bishop, still looking to ecclesiastical preferment, to venture to quarrel with one party in the dispute, and equally disagreeable for a statesman aspiring to popular authority to separate himself from the other. The result of the contest, also, was for a while uncertain; and as there was no absolute necessity for the Bishop of Autun to express any opinion upon its merits, he was silent. But when the Assembly had pronounced its final decree, and that decree had received the formal though reluctant assent of the King, the case was different. A law had been regularly passed, and the question was, not whether it was a good law, but whether, being a law,

it was to be obeyed. A battle had been fought, and the question was, not whether the victors were in the right, but whether it was better to join with those who had conquered, or with those who had been conquered.

In such a condition of things M. de Talleyrand rarely hesitated. He took his side with the law against the church, and with those who were daily becoming more powerful, against those who were daily becoming more feeble; and having once taken a step of this kind, it was never his custom to do so timidly.

He at once took the required oath, which all his episcopal brethren—with the notorious and not very creditable exceptions of the Bishops of Babylon and Lydia, whose titles were purely honorary—refused to take. He also justified this course in a letter to the clergy of his own department, and ultimately undertook to consecrate the new bishops who were elected to supply the place of those whom the Assembly had deprived of their dioceses.

We shall presently see the results of this conduct. But it may be as well at once to state, that although M. de Talleyrand accepted for himself those new regulations for his church which the State, in spite of the head of his church, had established, and took an oath to obey them without unwillingness, and although he even maintained that the State, considering the clergy as public functionaries enjoying a salary in return for the performance of public duties, might deprive any members of the clergy of such salary if they would not submit to the laws of the government which paid and employed them; he nevertheless contended, boldly and consistently and at all times, that all ecclesiastics thus dispossessed would have a right to the pension which, at the time of confiscating the church property, had been granted to any ecclesiastic whom the suppression of religious establishments or of useless benefices left without income or employment; a principle at first accepted as just, but soon condemned as inexpedient; for there is no compromise between parties when one is conscientiously disposed to resist what it deems an act of injustice, and the other resolutely determined to crush what it deems a selfish opposition.

IV.

Amidst the various vacancies which were occasioned by the refusal of the high dignitaries of the church to take the oath which the Constitution now exacted from them, was that of the archbishopric of Paris; and as it was known that M. de Talleyrand could be elected for this post if he so desired it, the public imagined that he intended to take advantage of his popularity and obtain what, up to that period, had been so honourable and important a position. In consequence of this belief a portion of the press extolled his virtues; whilst another painted and, as usual in such cases, exaggerated his vices.

M. de Talleyrand was, up to the last hour of his life, almost indifferent to praise, but singularly enough (considering his long and varied career), exquisitely sensitive to censure; and his susceptibility on this occasion so far got the better of his caution, as to induce him to write and publish a letter in the *Moniteur*, of Paris, February 8th, 1791.

Letter of M. de Talleyrand to the editors of the "Chronicle," respecting his candidature for the diocese of Paris.

"Gentlemen,

"I have just read in your paper that you have been good enough to name me as a candidate for the archbishopric of Paris. I cannot but feel myself highly flattered by this nomination: some of the electors have in fact given me to understand that they would be happy to see me occupy the post to which you have alluded, and I, therefore, consider that I ought to publish my reply. No, gentlemen, I shall not accept the honour of which my fellow-citizens are so obliging as to think me worthy.

"Since the existence of the National Assembly, I may have appeared indifferent to the innumerable calumnies in which different parties have indulged themselves at my expense. Never have I made, nor ever shall I make, to my calumniators the sacrifice of one single opinion or one single action which seems to me beneficial to the common-

wealth: but I can and will make the sacrifice of my personal advantage, and on this occasion alone my enemies will have influenced my conduct. I will not give them the power to say that a secret motive caused me to take the oath I have recently sworn. I will not allow them the opportunity of weakening the good which I have endeavoured to effect.

"That publicity which I give to the determination I now announce, I gave to my wishes when I stated how much I should be flattered at becoming one of the administrators of the department of Paris. In a free state, the people of which have repossessed themselves of the right of election —*i. e.* the true exercise of their sovereignty—I deem that to declare openly the post to which we aspire, is to invite our fellow-citizens to examine our claims before deciding upon them, and to deprive our pretensions of all possibility of benefiting by intrigue. We present ourselves in this way to the observations of the impartial, and give even the prejudiced and the hostile the opportunity to do their worst.

"I beg then to assure those who, dreading what they term my ambition, never cease their slanders against my reputation, that I will never disguise the object to which I have the ambition to pretend.

"Owing, I presume, to the false alarm caused by my supposed pretensions to the see of Paris, stories have been circulated of my having lately won in gambling houses the sum of sixty or seventy thousand francs. Now that all fear of seeing me elevated to the dignity in question is at an end, I shall doubtless be believed in what I am about to say. The truth is, that, in the course of two months, I gained the sum of about thirty thousand francs, not at gambling houses, but in private society, or at the chess-club, which has always been regarded, from the nature of its institution, as a private house.

"I here state the facts without attempting to justify them. The passion for play has spread to a troublesome extent. I never had a taste for it, and reproach myself the more for not having resisted its allurements. I blame

myself as a private individual, and still more as a legislator who believes that the virtues of liberty are as severe as her principles: that a regenerated people ought to regain all the austerity of morality, and that the National Assembly ought to be directed towards this vice as one prejudicial to society, inasmuch as it contributes towards that inequality of fortune which the laws should endeavour to prevent by every means which do not interfere with the eternal basis of social justice, viz., the respect for property.

"You see I condemn myself. I feel a pleasure in confessing it; for since the reign of truth has arrived, in renouncing the impossible honour of being faultless, the most noble manner we can adopt of repairing our errors is to have the courage to acknowledge them.

"TALLEYRAND A. E. D'AUTUN."

From this document we learn that the Bishop of Autun, notwithstanding his labours in the Assembly, was still a gay frequenter of the world: to be found pretty frequently at the chess-club, as well as in private society; and, though he lamented over the fact, a winner at such places of thirty thousand francs within two months. We also learn that he abandoned at this moment the idea of professional advancement, in order to maintain unimpeached the motives of his political conduct; and we may divine that he looked for the future rather to civil than to ecclesiastical preferment.

The most striking portion of this document, however, is the tone and style—I may almost say the cant—which prevails towards its conclusion. But every epoch has its pretensions: and that of the period which intervened between May, 1789, and August, 1792, was to decorate the easy life of a dissolute man of fashion with the pure language of a saint, or the stern precepts of a philosopher. "*Le dire*," says old Montaigne, "*est autre chose que le faire: il faut considérer le prêche à part, et le prêcheur à part.*"*

* "Saying is quite a different thing from doing: the preaching and the preacher must be considered apart."

V.

And now, or but a little after this time, might have been seen an agitated crowd, weeping; questioning, and rushing towards a house in the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. It was in the first days of April, and in that house—receiving through the open windows the balmy air which for a moment refreshed his burning forehead, and welcoming yet more gratefully the anxious voice of the inquiring multitude—lay the dying Mirabeau, about to carry into the tomb all the remaining wisdom and moderation of the people; and, as he himself sadly and proudly added, all the remaining fragments of that monarchy which he had shown the power to pull down and had flattered himself he might have the power to reconstruct. By his death-bed stood the Bishop of Autun. It was a curious combination of circumstances which thus brought together these two personages, whose characters were essentially different, but whose position was in some respects the same. The one was eloquent, passionate, overbearing, imprudent; the other cool, urbane, logical, and cautious. But both were of illustrious families, endowed with great abilities, ejected from their legitimate place in society. Both also were liberal in their politics, and this from vengeance and ambition, as well as from principle and opinion. Aristocrats allied with a democratic faction; monarchists in desperate conflict with those by whom monarchy was most held in reverence; they had engaged in a battle for moderation with extreme auxiliaries and extreme opponents. Mirabeau, the fifth child, but who became, by a brother's death, the eldest son of the Marquis de Mirabeau (a rich proprietor of a noble house in Provence), had been, when very young, married to a wealthy heiress, and intended for the profession of arms. Nevertheless, quitting his profession, separated from his wife, constantly involved in scrapes—now for money, now for love—he had led a bachelor's life of intrigue, indigence, and adventure, up to the age of forty, alternately the victim of his own wild nature and of the unwise and absurd severity of his father, whose two

pursuits in life were persecuting his family and publishing pamphlets for the benefit of mankind. Thus, frequently in confinement—always in difficulties (the first and last means of correction with the old marquis being to procure a "*lettre de cachet*," and to stop his son's allowance), the Comte de Mirabeau had supported himself almost entirely by his talents, which could apply themselves to letters, though action was their proper sphere.

During a short interval in his various calamities—an interval which he had passed at Paris in a desperate effort to better his condition—he had become acquainted with M. de Talleyrand, who, struck by his abilities and affected by his misfortunes, recommended him to M. de Calonne, at whose suggestion he was sent by M. de Vergennes, then minister of foreign affairs, on a sort of secret mission into Germany, just prior to the Great Frederick's death. From this mission he returned when France was being agitated by the convocation of the "notables," speedily succeeded by that of the States-General. He saw at a glance that an era was now approaching, suited to his eminent talents, and in which his haughty but flexible character was likely to force or insinuate its way: his whole soul, therefore, was bent upon being one of that assembly, which he from the first predicted would soon command the destinies of his country.

Certain expenses were necessary to obtain this object, and, as usual, Mirabeau had not a farthing. The means which he adopted for procuring the money he required were the least creditable he could have devised. He published a work called "The Secret History of the Court of Berlin," a work full of scandal, public and private, and betraying the mission with which he had recently been intrusted.*

The government was naturally indignant; a prosecution was instituted against him before the Parliament of

* A defence has been set up for Mirabeau, viz., that the work, though written by him, was published without his knowledge by a bookseller's wife, his mistress. But besides the utter improbability of this story, there is the fact that Mirabeau remained until his death on the best terms with the person who would thus have betrayed a most sacred trust and merited his bitterest contempt and indignation.

Paris; M. de Montmorin, and others, by whom he had previously been patronised, told him plainly they wished to drop his acquaintance.

Through all these disgraceful difficulties Mirabeau scrambled. He denied that the work was published by his authority.

Rejected from their sittings by the nobility of Provence, who decreed that, having no fiefs of his own, and being merely invested with his father's voice, he had no right to sit among the nobles, he became the successful candidate of the tiers-état for Aix; and at the meeting of the States-General stood before the ministry which had accused, and the aristocracy which had repudiated him, a daring and formidable enemy.

But, though made a desperate man by circumstances, he was not so either by inclination or by ideas.

His views for France were limited to the procuring it a representative government; and his views for himself were those which frequently lead ambitious men under such a government to adopt opposition as a road to power. "*Tribun par calcul*," as was justly said of him by a contemporary,* "*aristocrat par goût.*" He aimed at obtaining for his country a constitution, and being minister of the crown under that constitution.

M. de Talleyrand had the same wish, and probably the same ambition. These two statesmen, therefore, would naturally, at the meeting of the States-General, have acted together as two private friends who thought the same on public matters. But the publication of "The Secret History of the Court of Berlin," offensive to the minister who had employed Mirabeau, could not be otherwise than painful and disagreeable to M. de Talleyrand, at whose intercession Mirabeau had been employed, and to whom, indeed, Mirabeau's correspondence had been principally addressed. This circumstance had, therefore, produced a cessation of all private intimacy between these two personages who were about to exercise so great an influence over approaching events. It is difficult, however, for two men to act a prominent part on the same

* See *Les Considérations sur la Révolution*, by Madame de Staël.

side for any length of time in a popular assembly, and this at a great national crisis, without relapsing into an old acquaintance, or forming a new one. To what extent the old relations between Mirabeau and M. de Talleyrand were thus renewed, it is difficult to say, but that on the 21st of October, 1789, they already talked together with some degree of intimacy is evident from a letter of Mirabeau to the Comte de la Marck, in which letter Mirabeau states that he had been told the history of a secret political intrigue by the Bishop of Autun.*

About this time, too, it is now known that Mirabeau projected a ministry to which I have already alluded, and in which he and M. de Talleyrand were to be united. Had this ministry been formed, it is very possible that the history of France during the next sixty years would have been different.

But the most fatal measure adopted by the Assembly was that (November 9, 1789) which prevented any of its members from being minister during its continuance, and from entering the service of the crown for two years after its dissolution. The consequences of this resolution, aimed at those who, like Mirabeau and Talleyrand, were hoping to erect a constitutional government, and to have the direction of it, were incalculable. The persons at that time who had most influence in the Assembly were men with moderate opinions, great talents, and great ambition. Had such men been placed as the head of affairs they might have controlled them and established a government at once popular and safe. But this new regulation prevented those who were powerful as representatives of the people from using their influence in supporting the executive power of the crown. It drove them, moreover, if their passions were violent and their positions desperate, to seek for power by means hostile to the constitution which annihilated their hopes.

It had this effect upon Mirabeau; and his sentiments becoming known to the court, a sort of alliance established itself between them in the spring of 1790;—an alliance entered into too late (since most of the great questions on

* See *Appendix*.

which Mirabeau's influence might have been useful were already decided) and most absurdly carried on; for whilst the King opened to Mirabeau his purse, he shut from him his confidence, and at first, and for a long time, exacted that the compact he had entered into with the great orator for the defence of his throne should be kept altogether secret, even from his own ministers.*

Mirabeau was to advise the King in secret, to help him indirectly in public; but he was not to have the King's countenance, and he was to be thwarted and opposed by the King's friends.

The error which both parties to this arrangement committed was the result of the feeble and irresolute character of the one, who never did anything wholly and sincerely, and of the over-bold and over-confident character of the other, who never doubted that whatever he attempted must succeed, and who now easily persuaded himself that having vanquished the difficulty of opening a communication with the court, he should promptly vanquish that of governing it. Indeed, the desire of Mirabeau to serve the crown being sincere, and his ability to do so evident, he (not unnaturally perhaps) felt convinced that his sincerity would be trusted, and his talents given fair play.

But it is clear that the King thought of buying off a dangerous enemy, and not of gaining a determined ally. Thus he went on supplying Mirabeau's wants, receiving Mirabeau's reports, attending little to Mirabeau's counsels, until matters got so bad that even the irresolution of Louis XVI. was vanquished (this was about the end of 1790), and then, for the first time, was seriously entertained a plan which the daring orator had long ago advised, but which the King had never, up to that period, rejected nor yet sanctioned.

This plan consisted in withdrawing the King from Paris; surrounding him with troops still faithful, and by the aid

* When M. Mercy, the Austrian ambassador, and for a long time the intermediate agent between the court and Mirabeau, left Paris, M. de Montmorin, the minister of foreign affairs, was, without the knowledge of his colleagues, admitted into the secret of the court's engagements, and authorised to correspond with Mirabeau concerning their execution.

of a new assembly, for which public opinion was to be prepared, reforming the constitution—now on the point of being completed—a constitution which, while it pretended to be monarchical, not only prevented the monarch from practically exercising any power without the express permission of a popular assembly, but established, as its fundamental theory, that the King was merely the executor of that assembly's sovereign authority: an addition which, at first sight, may seem of small importance, but which, as it was calculated daily to influence the spirit of men's actions, could not but have an immense effect on the daily working of their institutions. Nor was this all. Nations, like individuals, have, so to speak, two wills: that of the moment—the result of passion, caprice, and impulse; and that of leisure and deliberation—the result of foresight, prudence, and reason. All free governments possessing any solidity (whatever their appellation) have, for this reason, contained a power of some kind calculated to represent the maturer judgment of the people and to check the spontaneous, violent, and changeful ebullitions of popular excitement. Even this barrier, however, was not here interposed between a chamber which was to have all the influence in the State, and a chief magistrate who was to have none.

The constitution about to be passed was, in short, an impracticable one, and no person saw this more clearly than Mirabeau; but, whilst ready and desirous to destroy it, he by no means lent himself to the ideas, though he was somewhat subjugated by the charms of Marie-Antoinette.

"Je serai ce que j'ai été toujours," he says in a letter to the King, 15th December, 1790, "défenseur du pouvoir monarchique réglé par les lois; apôtre de la liberté garantie par le pouvoir monarchique."*

Thus he undertook the difficult and almost impossible enterprise of rescuing liberty at the same time from a monarch in the hands of courtiers enthusiastic for absolute

* "I shall be what I have always been, the defender of the monarchical power, regulated by the laws; the apostle of liberty, guaranteed by the monarchical power."

power, and from a mob under the influence of clubs, which intended to trample constitutional monarchy under the feet of a democratical despotism.

I have narrated what had undoubtedly been Mirabeau's projects; for we have to consider what were probably his thoughts when, in acute suffering but with an unclouded mind and a clear prescience of his approaching dissolution, he summoned his former friend, with whom, it is said, he was never till that instant completely reconciled, to the couch from which he was no more to rise.

Must we not suppose that Mirabeau in this, his last conversation with M. de Talleyrand, spoke of the schemes which then filled his mind? And does it not seem probable that he at that hour conceived the Bishop of Autun to be the person best fitted to fill the difficult position which he himself was about to leave vacant, and amidst the various intrigues and combinations of which it required so much skill to steer?

For this supposition there are many plausible reasons. M. de Talleyrand, like Mirabeau, was an aristocrat by birth, a liberal by circumstances and opinion; he was also one of the members of the Assembly, who possessed the greatest authority over that portion of it which Mirabeau himself influenced; and likewise one of a very small number of members upon whom M. de Montmorin, the minister with whom Louis XVI. at last consented that Mirabeau should confidentially communicate, had told Mirabeau he most relied. Lastly, he was acquainted with all the classes and almost all the individuals then seeking to disturb, or hoping to compose, the disordered elements of society. He knew the court, the clergy, the Orleanists. He had been one of the founders of the Jacobins; he was a member of its moderate rival, the Feuillans; and although, undoubtedly, he wanted the fire and eloquence necessary to command in great assemblies, he was pre-eminent in the tact and address which enable a man to manage those by whom such assemblies are led.

In short, though Mirabeau left no Mirabeau behind him, M. de Talleyrand was, perhaps, the person best qualified to supply his loss, and the one whom Mirabeau

himself was most likely to have pointed out for a successor. I have no clue, however, beyond conjecture, to guide me on this subject, unless the public trust which Mirabeau confided to M. de Talleyrand in his last hours may be cited as a testimony of his other and more secret intentions. What this trust was, we may learn from the statement of M. de Talleyrand himself, who, on the following day, amidst a silence and a sorrow which pervaded all parties (for a man of superior genius, whatever his faults, rarely dies unlamented), ascending the tribune of the National Assembly, said in a voice which appeared unfeignedly affected:

"I went yesterday to the house of M. de Mirabeau. An immense crowd filled that mansion, to which I carried a sentiment more sorrowful than the public grief. The spectacle of woe before me filled the imagination with the image of death; it was everywhere but in the mind of him whom the most imminent danger menaced. He had asked to see me. It is needless to relate the emotion which many things he said caused me. But M. de Mirabeau was at that time above all things the man of the public; and in this respect we may regard as a precious relic the last words which could be saved from that mighty prey, on which death was about to seize. Concentrating all his interest on the labours that still remain to this Assembly, he remembered that the law of succession was the order of the day, and lamented he could not assist at the discussion of the question, regretting death, because it deprived him of the power of performing a public duty. But, as his opinion was committed to writing, he confided the manuscript to me, in order that I might in his name communicate it to you. I am going to execute this duty. The author of the manuscript is now no more; and so intimately were his wishes and thoughts connected with the public weal, that you may imagine yourselves catching his last breath, as you listen to the sentiments which I am about to read to you."

Such were the words with which M. de Talleyrand prefaced the memorable discourse which, in establishing the principles on which the law of inheritance has since rested

in France, laid the foundations of a new French society, on a basis which no circumstance that can now happen seems likely to alter.

"There is as much difference," said Mirabeau, "between what a man does during his life, and what he does after his death, as between death and life. What is a testament? It is the expression of the will of a man who has no longer any will respecting property which is no longer his property; it is the action of a man no longer accountable for his actions to mankind; it is an absurdity, and an absurdity ought not to have the force of law."

Such is the argument set forth in this celebrated and singular speech. Ingenious rather than profound, it does not seem, as we turn to it coolly now, worthy of the reputation it attained, nor of the effect which it has undoubtedly produced. But, read in M. de Talleyrand's deep voice, and read as the last thoughts upon testamentary dispositions of a man who was making his own will when he composed it, and who since then was with his luminous intellect and marvellous eloquence about to be consigned to the obscure silence of the grave, it could hardly fail to make a deep impression. It was, moreover, the mantle of the departed prophet; and the world, whether wrong or right in the supposition, fancied that it saw in this political legacy the intention to designate a political successor.

VI.

Thus, M. de Talleyrand, already, as we have seen, a member of the department of Paris, was immediately chosen to fill the place in the directorship of that department, an appointment which Mirabeau's death left vacant.

In this municipal council, considerable influence still existed; nor did it want various means for exercising that influence over the middle classes of the capital; so that a man of resolution and tact could have made it one of the most useful instruments for restoring the royal authority and consolidating it on new foundations.

It seems not unlikely, indeed, that M. de Talleyrand had the design of making it popular as the organ of good advice to the King, and of making the King popular by

engaging him to listen to this advice, since we find that it drew up an address to him on the 18th April (about a fortnight after Mirabeau's death), urging him to put aside from his councils those whom the nation distrusted, and to confide frankly in the men who were yet popular: whilst there is reason to believe, as I shall by-and-by have occasion to show, that M. de Talleyrand entered about this time into secret negotiations with the King, or, at least, offered him, through M. de Laporte, his best assistance.

But Louis XVI. was more likely to trust a bold and passionate man like Mirabeau, whom, notwithstanding his birth, he looked upon—considering the situation in which the Revolution had found him—as an adventurer who had been almost naturally his opponent, until he had purchased his support, rather than a man like M. de Talleyrand; a philosopher, a wit, who might be said to have been bred a courtier; and, on the other hand, M. de Talleyrand himself was too cautious to commit himself boldly and entirely to the daring and doubtful schemes which Mirabeau had prepared, until he saw a tolerable chance of their being successful.

Other circumstances, moreover, occurred at this time, which could not but have an unfavourable influence as to the establishment of any serious concert between the scrupulous and mistrustful monarch, and the chess-playing, constitutional bishop.

VII.

When M. de Talleyrand rejected the archbishopric of Paris, it was clear that he expected nothing further from the church; and he no doubt from that moment conceived the idea of freeing himself from its trammels on the first decent opportunity: nor did he long wait for this opportunity, for, on the 26th of April, one day after his consecration of the Curé Expelles, the newly-elected Bishop of Finisterre, arrived a brief thus announced in the *Moniteur* of the 1st of May, 1791:

"*Le bref du Pape est arrivé jeudi dernier. De Talleyrand-Périgord, ancien évêque d'Autun, y est sus-*

pendu de toutes fonctions et excommunié, après quarante jours s'il ne revient pas a résipiscence."*

The moment had now come for that decisive measure which the unwilling ecclesiastic had for some time contemplated; for he had too much tact to think of continuing his clerical office under the interdiction of the head of his church, and was by no means prepared to abandon his political career, and to reconcile himself with Rome, on the condition of separating himself from wealth and ambition. But one alternative remained—that of abandoning the profession into which he had been forced to enter. This he did at once, and without hesitation; appearing in the world henceforth (though sometimes styled in public documents the Abbé de Périgord, or the ancien évêque d'Autun) under the plain designation of M. de Talleyrand, a designation which I have already frequently applied to him, and by which, though he was destined to be raised to far higher titles, he has by universal consent descended to posterity. The act was a bold one; but, like most bold acts in difficult circumstances, it was not (I speak of it as a matter of worldly calculation) an imprudent one: for it released an indifferent priest from a position which he could only fill with decency by a constant hypocrisy, for which he was too indolent; and it delivered up an able statesman to a career for which, by the nature of his talents, he was peculiarly fitted. Neither was M. de Talleyrand's withdrawal from the church so remarkable a fact at that moment as it would have been at any other; for France, and even Europe, were then overrun by French ex-ecclesiastics of all grades, who were prohibited from assuming their rank and unable to fulfil their duties, and who, in many cases, were obliged to conceal their real calling under that from which they earned a daily subsistence.

Nevertheless, the Bishop of Autun's particular case excited and merited attention. It had been as an organ and representative of the French church, that this prelate

* "The brief of the Pope arrived last Thursday. De Talleyrand-Périgord, the late Bishop of Autun, is suspended from all functions and excommunicated, if after forty days he has not repented."

had contributed in no slight degree to alienate its property and change its constitution ; and now, his brethren in the French clergy being what he had made them, he voluntarily threw their habit from his shoulders and renounced all participation in their fate.

It might, it is true, be urged that none had lost more by the destruction of the ancient church and its institutions than himself, that he had originally become a priest against his inclinations, and that he was compelled to decide either against his convictions as a citizen or against his obligations as a churchman. Still, this desertion from his order by one who had been so conspicuous a member of it, was undoubtedly a scandal, and though the world usually pardons those whom it has an interest to forgive, and though M. de Talleyrand, if he erred, had the consolation of living to see his errors forgiven or overlooked by many very rigid Catholics, who enjoyed his society, by many very pious princes, who wanted his services, and even by the Pope himself, when his holiness was in a situation to fear his enmity and require his good-will—he himself never felt entirely at his ease as to his early profession, and was so sensitive on the subject that the surest way to offend him was to allude to it. I was told by a lady, long intimate with M. de Talleyrand, that even the mention of the word "lawn" annoyed him.

As to Louis XVI., although making perpetual compromises with his conscience, he was of all persons the one most likely to be shocked by a bishop thus coolly converting himself into a layman; whilst it must be added that M. de Talleyrand was of all persons the one least likely to respect Louis XVI.'s scruples.

We may, therefore, reasonably suppose that whatever relations were indirectly kept up between them at this time, such relations were neither intimate nor cordial, but rather those which men not unfrequently maintain with persons whom they neither like nor trust, but are ready to serve under or be served by, should circumstances arrive to render a closer connection mutually advantageous.

The King, however, had become more and more puzzled

by the opposing advice of his various and never-trusted counsellors, and more and more dissatisfied with the prospect of having shortly to assent to a constitution which, in reality, he looked upon as an abdication. It was not surprising, therefore, that, on the morning of the 21st of June, it was discovered that he had, with his family, quitted Paris; and it was shortly afterwards ascertained that the fugitives had directed their course towards the north of France and the camp of M. de Bouillé.

It will be remembered that, to withdraw from the capital to the camp of this officer, in whose judgment, ability, and fidelity Louis XVI. most relied, was part of Mirabeau's old scheme.

But this was not all: the King, in a paper which he left behind him, stated that it was his intention to retire to some portion of his "kingdom where he could freely exercise his judgment, and there to make such changes in the proposed constitution" (it was on the point of being terminated) "as were necessary to maintain the sanctity of religion, to strengthen the royal authority, and to consolidate a system of true liberty." A declaration of this kind (though the words I have cited were rather ambiguous) was also comprised in the scheme of Mirabeau.

Now, M. de Montmorin, the minister of foreign affairs —with one of whose passports the King had actually made his escape as a servant of a Madame de Korff—had been initiated, as we know, into Mirabeau's secrets, and M. de Talleyrand was one of M. de Montmorin's friends, and had been, as we have recently seen, by Mirabeau's bedside during his last hours. Hence it might be inferred, notwithstanding the causes which prevented any real sympathy or cordial understanding between the King and the ex-Bishop of Autun, that the latter was privy to the flight of the former, and prepared to take part in the plans of which that flight was to be the commencement.

Rumours, indeed, to this effect, concerning both M. de Montmorin and M. de Talleyrand, were for a moment circulated in Paris.

But M. de Montmorin proved to the satisfaction of the Assembly that he was innocent of all participation in the King's evasion; and the reports respecting M. de Talleyrand never went further than to one or two of those journals which at that time disgraced the liberty of the press by their total indifference as to whether they published truth or falsehood.

It is also to be remarked that M. de Lafayette, whom on that subject one must accept as a good authority, expressly charges the King with having left M. de Montmorin and his most intimate friends ignorant of his intentions.

"Il était ignoré," says M. de Lafayette, "de ses ministres, des royalistes de l'Assemblée, tous laissés exposés à un grand peril. Telle était la situation non seulement des gardes nationaux de service, de leurs officiers, mais des amis les plus dévoués du roi, du duc de Brissac, commandant des cent-suisses, et de M. de Montmorin qui avait très-innocement donné un passeport sous le nom de la baronne de Korff."*

It is difficult to account for the inconsistency in Louis XVI.'s conduct, except by referring to the inconsistency of his character: I am, however, disposed to surmise that, after Mirabeau's death, he considered it would be impossible to unite a considerable portion of the Assembly and the army in one common plan; and that he then began carrying on at the same time two plans: the one relative to the policy he should pursue in the event of his stay in the capital, which he probably conducted through M. de Montmorin, who was intimate with tho leading members of the constitutional party in the Assembly; the other relative to his flight, which he only entrusted to the general whose camp he was about to seek, and to those private friends and adherents who took little part in public

* "The ministers, the royalists of the Assembly, were all left in ignorance of the King's intentions, and exposed to great peril. Such was the situation, not only of the National Guards and their officers, but also of the most devoted of the King's friends, the Duc de Brissac, commander of the Swiss Guards, and M. de Montmorin, who had unwittingly given a passport in the name of the Baroness de Korff."

affairs. It is further to be presumed that, according to his constant incertitude and indolence, never long or firmly fixed on any one project, he was scared by apprehensions of the mob at the moment when most disposed to remain quietly in his palace, and alarmed at the risk and trouble of moving when actually pressing the preparations for his journey.

In this manner we may best reconcile his writing to M. de Bouillé, to expect him at Montmedy within a week of his declaring to the sovereigns of Europe (23rd April) that he was satisfied with his condition at Paris: in this manner, likewise, we may explain his solemnly assuring the general of the National Guard that he would not quit the Tuileries, only two or three days before he actually did so.*

He rarely did what he intended to do; and belied himself more frequently from change of intentions, than from intentional insincerity.

VIII.

At all events, it seems probable (returning to the fact with which we are in the present instance most concerned) that Louis XVI.'s departure took place without M. de Talleyrand's active assistance, but I do not think it probable that it was altogether without his knowledge.

The ex-Bishop had such a varied and extensive acquaintance that he was pretty certain to know what he wished to know; and it was according to his usual practice to contrive that he should not be compromised if the King's projects failed, and yet that he should be in a situation to show that the King was indebted to him if those projects succeeded. It is useless to speculate on what might have occurred had the unfortunate monarch reached his destination: for travelling in a carriage peculiarly heavy and peculiarly conspicuous at the rate of three miles an hour, walking up the hills, putting his

* "Ce prince (Louis XVI.) dont on ne peut trop déplorer le manque de bonne foi dans cette occasion, lui donna les assurances si positives, si solennelles, qu'il crut pouvoir répondre *sur sa tête* que le roi ne partirait pas."—*Mémoires de Lafayette.*

head out of the windows at the post-houses, Louis XVI. arrived at the place where he was to have met his escort twenty hours later than the appointed time, and was finally stopped at the bridge of Varennes by a few resolute men, and reconducted leisurely to the capital, amidst the insults of the provinces and the silence of Paris.

The important question then arose, What was to be done respecting him?

Was he to be deposed in favour of a republic? All contemporary writers agree that, at this moment, the idea of a republic was only in a few visionary minds. Was he to be deposed in favour of a new monarch, which, considering the emigration of his brothers and the infancy of his child, could only be in favour of a new dynasty? or, was he to be reinstated in the position he had quitted?

IX.

The views and conduct of M. de Talleyrand are at this crisis interesting. We have been told by contemporaries, that he and Sieyès were of opinion that there was a better chance of making the Revolution successful with a limited monarchy under a new chief, elected by the nation, than under the old one, who claimed his throne in virtue of hereditary right; and we can easily understand their reasoning.

A king who had succeeded to a throne from which his ancestors had been accustomed for centuries to dictate absolutely to their people, could hardly be sincerely satisfied with possessing on sufferance a remnant of his ancestors' former authority; nor could a people be ever wholly without suspicion of a prince who had to forget the ideas with which he had received the sceptre before he could respect those which restricted the use of it.

Louis XVI., moreover, had attempted to escape from his palace, as a prisoner escaping from his gaol, and as a prisoner thus escaping he had been caught and brought back to his place of confinement.

It was difficult to make anything of a sovereign in this condition save a puppet, to be for a while the tool, and ere long the victim, of contending parties.

Now, M. de Talleyrand had always a leaning to the Orleans branch of the House of Bourbon: neither did he think so ill of the notorious personage who was then the representative of the Orleans family, as the contemporaries from whose report posterity has traced his portrait.

Of this prince he once said, in his own pithy manner, "Le duc d'Orléans est le vase dans lequel on a jeté toutes les ordures de la Révolution;"* and this was not untrue.

Philippe d'Orléans, indeed, who has figured in history under the nickname or *sobriquet* of "Egalité," was neither fitted for the part of a great sovereign in turbulent times nor for that of a quiet and obscure citizen at any more tranquil period. Nevertheless, he was not so bad a man as he has been represented; for both Legitimists and Republicans have been obliged to blacken his character in order to excuse their conduct to him.

His character has, furthermore, been mystified and exaggerated, as we have looked at it by the lurid glare of that unnatural vote which brings the later period of his life always prominently and horribly before us. Still, in reality, he was rather a weak man, led into villainous deeds by want of principle, than a man of a strong and villainous nature, who did not scruple at crimes when they seemed likely to advance his ambition. His only one strong passion was a desire to be talked about.

It is possible that the King, by skilful management, might have turned this ruling wish of his most powerful subject to the profit of his monarchy: for the young Duc de Chartres was at one time anxious to shine as an aspirant to military fame. The government, however, denied his request to be employed as became his rank; and when, despite of this denial, he engaged in a naval combat as a volunteer, the court unjustly and impoliticly spread reports against his courage. To risk his life in a balloon, to run riot in every extravagance of debauch, to profess the opinions of a republican though the first prince of the blood royal, were demonstrations of the same disposition which might have made him a gallant soldier, a furious

* "The Duc d'Orléans is the vase into which people have thrown all the filth of the Revolution."

bigot, a zealous royalist, and even a very tolerable constitutional monarch.

As to the various stories of his incessant schemes and complicated manœuvres for exciting the populace, debauching the soldiery, and seizing the crown, they are, in my opinion, no more worthy of credit than the tales which at the same period were equally circulated of Louis XVI.'s drunkenness, and Marie-Antoinette's debaucheries. Belonging to those whom Tacitus has described as "men loving idleness—though hating quiet," seeking popularity more than power, and with a character easily modelled by circumstances, I am by no means certain, that if M. de Talleyrand did think of bestowing on him what was afterwards called a "citizen crown" (it must be remembered that he had not then been lowered and disgraced by the follies or crimes into which he was subsequently led), the plan was not the best which could have been adopted. But there was one great and insurmountable obstacle to this design.

General Lafayette commanded the National Guard of Paris, and although his popularity was already on the wane, he was still—Mirabeau being dead—the most powerful citizen that had been raised up by the Revolution. He did not want to run new risks, nor to acquire greater power, nor to have a monarch with more popularity or more authority than the runaway king.

Courageous rather than audacious, more avid of popularity than of power, a chivalric knight-errant, an amiable enthusiast, rather than a great captain, or a practical politician, the part which suited him was that of parading himself before the people as the guardian of the constitution, and before the sovereign as the idol of the nation. To this part he wished to confine himself; and the monarch under whom he could play it most easily was Louis XVI. Nor was this all.

Ambitious men may agree as to sharing the attributes of office; vain men will not agree as to sharing the pleasure of applause: and it is said that Lafayette never forgot that there was another bust, that of the Duc d'Orléans, carried about the streets of Paris together with

his own, on the memorable day which saw the destruction of the Bastille. To any idea, therefore, of the Duc d'Orléans as King of France, he was decidedly opposed.

X.

Thus, after making just that sort of effort in favour of the younger branch of the Bourbons which left him free to support the elder one, if such effort proved abortive, M. de Talleyrand finally declared for Louis XVI., as the only person who could be monarch, if a monarchy could be preserved; and was also for giving this prince such a position as he might honourably accept, with functions that he might really fulfil.

The King himself, it must be added, was now in a better disposition than he had hitherto been for frankly accepting the conditions of the new existence proposed to him.

A hero, or rather a saint, when it was required of his fortitude to meet danger or to undergo suffering, his nature was one of those which shrink from exertion, and prefer endurance to a struggle for either victory or escape.

It was with difficulty that he had been so far roused into action as to attempt his recent expedition; he had been disgusted with its trouble, more than awed by its peril. Death itself seemed preferable to another such effort.

He had seen, likewise, from the feeling of the provinces, and even from the infidelity of the troops, who, sent to escort him, might have attempted his rescue; but who, when told to cry, "*Vive le Roi!*" cried, "*Vive la Nation!*" that, even if he had reached M. de Bouillé's camp, it would have been difficult for that general, notwithstanding his firmness of character and military ability, to have placed the sovereign of France in any position within the French territory from which he might have dictated to, or even treated with, the French people. To quit Paris, therefore, a second time was evidently to quit France and to unite himself with, and to be subordinate to, that party of *émigrés* which had always preferred his younger brother, whose presumption had become insulting to his authority and offensive to Marie-Antoinette's pride.

On the other hand, many persons of note in the Assembly who had hitherto employed their talents and their popularity towards the weakening of the monarchical power, were at this juncture disposed to strengthen it.

Amongst the commissioners sent to conduct Louis XVI. from Varennes to Paris, was Barnave, an eloquent young lawyer, who, from a desire to distinguish himself in a glorious rivalry with Mirabeau, had adopted that party in the Assembly which, whilst declaring itself against a republic, contended in all discussions, and especially in the famous discussion on the *veto*, for abridging and in fact annihilating the royal authority. Struck by the misfortunes of Marie-Antoinette,—beauty never appearing so attractive to a generous heart as in the hour of distress,—and convinced, perhaps, by his own personal observations that Louis XVI. had in many respects been grossly calumniated, Barnave had at last adopted the views which had previously been formed by his great rival, whose ashes then slept in the Pantheon.

The two Lameths also, officers of noble birth, possessing some talent and more spirit, perceiving that by the course they had hitherto pursued they had raised up at each step more formidable rivals amongst the lower classes of society than any they would otherwise have had to encounter amongst the leaders of the nobility or the favourites of the court, were now as anxious to restrain the democracy which they hated, as Barnave was to assist the queen whom he loved; whilst many of all ranks, conscientiously in favour of liberty, but as justly alarmed at anarchy, beginning to consider it more important to curb the license of the mob and the clubs than that of the King and the government, were for rallying round the tottering throne and trying to give it a tolerable foundation of security.

XI.

For these reasons, then, there was a combination of interests, desires, and abilities, in favour of establishing Louis XVI. at the head of such a constitution, as, if not the best possible, would have been the best possible at that time; and, every other rational project seeming out of the

question, M. de Talleyrand entered, as I have said, into this one, although with less faith in its practicability than some of his coadjutors.

There were, however, at this moment circumstances which favoured it. An assemblage, collected together by the influence and exhortations of the most violent of the Jacobins for the purpose of signing a petition to the Assembly against the continuance of the monarchy, having given a sufficient pretext by its tumultuous character and excesses to justify the act, was dispersed by Lafayette at the head of the National Guard, and with the authority of Bailly, mayor of Paris;—that is, with the force and authority of the whole mass of the *bourgeoisie*, or middle class.

The Republicans were daunted. A revision of the constitution, moreover, was required; for the desultory and inconsistent manner in which many of the measures of the Assembly had been voted, rendered it necessary to distinguish between those which were temporary in their character and those that were to remain fundamental laws of the State. This revision offered the opportunity of introducing changes of importance into the constitution itself, and amongst these a second chamber or senate.

To this addition even Lafayette consented; although his opinion was that such second chamber should be elective, as in the United States (his constant model), and not hereditary as in England, which another section of public men—anxious to maintain an aristocracy as well as a monarchy—desired.

The moderate party, still powerful in the departments, in Paris, and in the National Guard, as well as in the army, had not, nevertheless, by itself a majority in the Assembly; and a mere majority could not have undertaken so great a plan as that contemplated. With the aid of the Royalists, however, the execution of this plan was easy. But the Royalists, consisting of two hundred and ninety members, with the Abbé Maury at their head (Cazales, the other leader of the Royalist party, at this time emigrated), retaining their seats in the Assembly, declined to take any part in its proceedings;—and in this manner the only hope of safety for the King was destroyed

by the very persons who arrogated to themselves the title of "the King's friends;" nor was this course, though foolish and unpatriotic, altogether unnatural.

What a party can least bear is the triumph of its opponents: the consolidation of a constitutional government was the triumph of that party, which from the beginning of the Revolution had advocated such a government and declared it possible. The triumph of the opposite party, on the contrary, was, that there should be an absolute monarchy, or no monarchy; a government of "*lettres de cachet*," or no government. This party had to prove that to diminish the sovereign's power was to conduct him to the scaffold; that to give the people freedom was to overthrow society. Thus, if they did not hope for the worst, they would do nothing to secure the best that was practicable. It is conjunctures like these which confound the calculations of those who fancy that men will act according to their interests.

Left to themselves, the Constitutionalists had not sufficient power to give battle to the democrats in the Assembly and the clubs out of it. They voted the King a body-guard and a privy purse—measures better calculated to excite the envy than to curb the license of the populace; and then, betrayed by the same wish to show their disinterestedness, which had made them parties, in November, 1789, to the stupid declaration that no member of the National Assembly should be the King's minister, they committed the still greater folly of declaring that no member of the National Assembly should sit in the next legislature, nor hold any office under the Crown during its continuance; a decree decapitating France, and delivering an untried constitution into the hands of inexperienced legislators.

This decree left the future too obscure for any man of calmness and judgment to flatter himself that there was more than a faint probability of fixing its destinies for some years to come; but whatever these destinies might be, the reputation of the statesman whose views formed the mind of a rising generation, would survive the errors and passions of a past one.

It was with this thought before him that M. de Talleyrand, just previous to the dissolution of the National Assembly, or, as it is sometimes called, *l'Assemblée constituante*, brought under its notice a vast project of education, then too late to be decided upon, but which, printed and recommended to the attention of the coming legislature, and having at one extremity the communal school and at the other the Institute, exists with but slight alterations at this very day.

The Assembly now separated (on the 13th of September) amidst that usual exhibition of fireworks and fêtes which mark the history of the animated and variable people, who, never contented and never despairing, exhibit the same joy when they crown their heroes or break their idols.

Such was the end of that great Assembly which passed away rapidly from the face of affairs at the moment, but which left its foot-print on the world for generations that have not yet effaced it.

In this Assembly, M. de Talleyrand was the most conspicuous figure after Mirabeau, as he was hereafter in the Empire the most conspicuous personage after Napoleon; and I have dwelt more on this portion of his career than I may do upon others, because it is the one least known, and for which he has been least appreciated.

The reputation, however, which he obtained and justly earned in those violent and turbulent times, was not of a violent or turbulent character. A member of the two famous clubs of the day (Jacobins and Feuillans), he frequented them occasionally, not to take part in their debates, but to be acquainted with and influence those who did. In the National Assembly he had always sided with the most moderate who could hope for power, and who did not abjure the Revolution.

Necker, Mounier, Mirabeau, had successively his support so long as they took an active part in public affairs. In the same manner he acted, when they disappeared, with Barnave and the two Lameths; and even with Lafayette, though he and that personage disliked and despised each other. No personal feeling altered his course; it was

never marked by personal prejudices, nor can I say that it was ever illumined by extraordinary eloquence. His influence arose from his proposing great and reasonable measures at appropriate times, in singularly clear and elegant language; and this from the height of a great social position. He did not pretend to be guided by sentiment or emotion; neither hatred, nor devotion, nor apprehension, ever seemed to affect his conduct. He avowed that he wished for a constitutional monarchy, and was willing to do all he could to obtain one. But he never said he would sacrifice himself to this idea if it proved impossible to make it successful.

Many have attacked his honour because, being a noble and a churchman, he sided against the two orders he belonged to; but in reality he rather wished to make ancient things live amongst new ideas than to sweep ancient things away. Others have denied his sagacity in promoting a revolution which drove him from affluence and power into poverty and exile. But, in spite of what has been said to the contrary, I by no means believe that the end of the Revolution of 1789 was the natural consequence of its commencement. The more we examine the history of that period, the more we are struck by the incessant and unaccountable follies of those who wished to arrest it. There was no want of occasions when the most ordinary courage and good sense on the part of the King and his friends would have given the one all the power it was advisable he should exercise, and preserved the other in as influential a position as was compatible with the abolition of intolerable abuses. No man can calculate with accuracy on all the faults that may be committed by his opponents. It is probable that M. de Talleyrand did not calculate on the utter subversion of the society he undertook to reform; but it appears that at each crisis he foresaw the dangers that were approaching, and counselled the measures most likely to prevent their marring his country's prospects and his own fortunes.

At the actual moment, he perceived that the new legislature would be a new world, which could neither have the same notions, nor belong to the same society, nor

be subject to the same influences, as the last; and that the wisest thing to do was to withdraw himself from the Paris horizon until the clouds that obscured it had, in some direction or other, passed away.

In England, he was sufficiently near not to be forgotten, and sufficiently distant not to be compromised. England, moreover, was the natural field of observation at that moment for a French statesman. To England, therefore, he went, accompanied by M. de Biron, and arrived in London on the 25th of January, 1792.

Part III.

FROM CLOSE OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO CONSULATE.

M. de Talleyrand in London.—Manner and appearance.—Witticisms.—Visit to England.—Lord Grenville refuses to discuss business with him.—Goes to Paris; returns with letter from King.—State of affairs in France prevents success of any mission in England.—Arrives in Paris just prior to the 10th of August.—Escapes and returns to England, the 16th of September, 1792.—Writes to Lord Grenville, declaring he has no mission.—Sent away the 28th of January, 1794.—Goes to America.—Waits until the death of Robespierre.—Gets then permission to return to France.—Chénier declares that he was employed by Provisional Government in 1792, when he had told Lord Grenville he was not.—Successful reception.—Description of Directory and of society at that time.—Chosen Secretary of Institute, and read two remarkable memoirs to it.—Named Minister of Foreign Affairs.—Sides with Barras and Executive against the Assemblies.—Negotiations at Lille broken off.—Address to diplomatic agents.—Peace of Campo Formio.—Bonaparte goes to Egypt.—Democrats triumph in the Directory.—M. de Talleyrand quits office, and publishes an answer to accusations made against him.—Paris tired with the Directory.—Bonaparte returns from Egypt.—Talleyrand unites with Sieyès to overturn the Government, and place power in Bonaparte's hands.

I.

When M. de Talleyrand made his first appearance in our country, many persons in it still continued favourable to the French Revolution, and viewed with esteem those who had rather sought to destroy crying abuses than to put fantastical theories into practice. Thus, although naturally preceded by the calumnies which were certain to be circulated about a man who had played so remarkable a part on so eventful a scene as that which he had just quitted, the ex-Bishop of Autun was, on the whole, well received by a large portion of our aristocracy, and became particularly intimate at Lansdowne House. The father of the late marquis mentioned to me that he remembered him dining there frequently, and being particularly silent and

particularly pale. A contemporary, indeed, describes M. de Talleyrand at this time as aiming to impose on the world by an air of extreme reserve :—

"His manner was cold, he spoke little, his countenance, which in early youth had been distinguished for its grace and delicacy, had become somewhat puffed and rounded, and to a certain degree effeminate, being in singular contrast with a deep and serious voice which no one expected to accompany such a physiognomy. Rather avoiding than making advances, neither indiscreet, nor gay, nor familiar, but sententious, formal, and scrutinizing, —the English hardly knew what to make of a Frenchman who so little represented the national character.

"But this exterior was a mask, which he threw off in the circles in which he was at his ease, talking in these freely, taking the greatest pains to please, and being remarkable for the choice of his expressions and a certain epigrammatic wit, which had a singular charm for those who were accustomed to his society. His was the saying cited by Chamfort, *à propos* of Rulhières,* who—on observing that he did not know why he was called ill-natured, for in all his life he had never done but one ill-natured action—was replied to by M. de Talleyrand's drily observing, '*Et quand finira-t-elle ?*'—'when will it end ?'

"One evening, playing at long whist, the conversation turned on an old lady who had married her footman ; some people expressed their surprise, when M. de Talleyrand, counting his points, drawled out in a slow voice, '*At nine, one does not count honours.*'

"Another time," says the person from whom I am quoting, "we were speaking of the infamy of a colleague, when I burst out by exclaiming, 'That man is capable of assassinating any one!' '*Assassinating, no!*' said M. de Talleyrand, coolly ; '*poisoning, yes!*'

"His manner of narrating was full of grace ; he was a model of good taste in conversation. Indolent, voluptuous,

* M. de Rulhières, l'ancien secrétaire du baron de Bretueil à St. Pétersbourg, le confident du maréchal de Richelieu, le poëte de la duchesse d'Egmont, narrateur fort rodouté de Catherine II., &c. &c.

born for wealth and grandeur, he accustomed himself in exile to a life simple and full of privations, sharing with his friends the produce of his magnificent library, which he sold very ill, the spirit of party preventing many from becoming purchasers."

This description, from Dumont (pp. 361, 362), is interesting as a personal sketch at one of the most critical periods of M. de Talleyrand's life; that is, at the commencement of his career as a diplomatist; for the voyage to England which he was now making, first suggested to Louis XVI. by M. de Montmorin, and subsequently realized by the minister who succeeded him, was (though this could not be officially avowed on account of the self-denying ordinance of the National Assembly) of an official character; a fact suspected if not known at the time. Lord Gower, indeed (our ambassador at Paris), speaks of it in January as a *mission* of peace. Lord Grenville, in a communication to Lord Gower, in February, says M. de Talleyrand had brought him a letter from M. Delessart, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, and in March again he thus writes:*

"I have seen Monsieur de Talleyrand twice since his arrival on the business of his *mission* to this country.

"The first time he explained to me very much at large the disposition of the French government and nation to enter into the closest connection with Great Britain, and proposed that this should be done by a mutual guarantee, or in such other manner as the government of this country should propose. Having stated this, he earnestly requested that he might not receive any answer at the time, but that he might see me again for that purpose. I told him that, in compliance with his request, I would see him again for the object he wished, though I thought it fair to apprise him that, in all probability, my answer would be confined to the absolute impossibility of entering into any kind of discussion or negotiation on points of so delicate a nature with a person having no official authority to treat upon them. When I did see him again I repeated this to him, telling him it was the only answer I could give to any

* March 9. Lord Grenville to Lord Gower.

proposal that he might make to me, although I had no difficulty in saying to him individually, as I had to every Frenchman with whom I had conversed on the present state of France, that it was very far from being the disposition of H. M. Government to foment or prolong any disturbances there with a view of any profit to be derived from them to this country."

The coyness of Lord Grenville to enter into political discussions at this moment with M. de Talleyrand might arise in some degree from the position of the French ministry, for though M. de Talleyrand had brought a letter, as has been said, from M. Delessart, who belonged to the more moderate section of the French ministry, his intimate friend in it was the Comte de Narbonne; named, just previous to M. de Talleyrand's departure, minister of war, and who, being the youngest and most ardent member of the government, was all for an immediate war with Austria, as the only means of saving France from the internal agitation that was preying on her, and the only means of definitively separating the King from the French *émigrés* and the court of Vienna, whose counsels rendered it impossible to count on his conduct.

M. de Talleyrand shared these ideas. Narbonne's colleagues, however, soon began to think the young soldier's views, to which they had at one time half assented, were too adventurous; and M. de Talleyrand's position becoming more and more difficult, was. after Lord Grenville's conversation in March, untenable. He returned, therefore, to Paris, and on arriving at its gates, learnt that M. de Narbonne was out of office.

But the moderate Constitutionalists who thought of governing without M. de Narbonne had not been employed till their party had lost its influence, and were unable to stem the opposition to which the removal of their popular colleague had given a new impulse. They soon, therefore, gave way to the celebrated Gironde, a band which, though rigid in its own principles of conduct, was not indisposed to profit by the assistance of able men less scrupulous; and General Dumouriez, a clever and bold adventurer, became minister of foreign affairs. He had precisely the

same views as Narbonne with respect to a war with Austria, and thought that it was of the utmost importance to make sure of the neutrality of England.

M. de Talleyrand had, as we learn from Lord Gower, the address to speak satisfactorily of the sentiments of the British Government after returning from his late expedition, and to attribute whatever was unfriendly in its language to the irregularity of the character he had appeared in. He was again chosen, then, as the French negotiator; and though, as in the former instance, he could not be named ambassador, everything that the law permitted was done to give weight to his character;—Louis XVI. giving him a letter to George III. expressive of his confidence in the bearer. In the meantime, M. de Chauvelin, a gentleman of fashion, professing popular principles, but who would never have been placed in so important a post had not M. de Talleyrand been his counsellor, was named minister plenipotentiary.

M. Dumouriez announces this double appointment to Lord Grenville on the 21st of April, that is, the day after the declaration of war with Austria, saying—

"That M. de Talleyrand, in his recent voyage to London, had stated to Lord Grenville the desire of the French government to contract the most intimate relations with Great Britain. That it was particularly desirable at that moment, when France was on the eve of a war that she had not been able to avoid, to assure herself of the friendship of that government which could most aid in bringing about a peace; that for this object M. de Chauvelin had been named minister plenipotentiary, a gentleman chosen on account of the knowledge which his Majesty had of his person, sentiments, and talents; and that to him had been adjoined, in consequence of the extreme importance of the negotiation, M. de Talleyrand (whose abilities were well known to Lord Grenville), and M. de Roveray,* formerly *procureur-général* in Geneva—a gentleman known in Switzerland as well as in France; and the King hoped that the efforts of three persons, understanding the situa-

* He acted as secretary to the mission.

tion of France, and enjoying great confidence with the French people, would not be without result."

This letter was dated, as we have said, on the 21st April, but the embassy did not reach its destination till the month of May: M. de Chauvelin having been at first displeased with the adjunction of M. de Talleyrand, and not indisposed to prolong his dissatisfaction, had not the minister, fatigued with quarrels about trifles at so critical a moment, terminated them by saying, "M. de Talleyrand s'amuse, M. de Chauvelin fronde, M. de Roveray marchande:* if these gentlemen are not off by to-morrow night they will be superseded."

The story (told by Dumont) is worth notice, as showing the careless indolence which the *ci-devant* bishop often affected in the affairs which he had most at heart—an indolence which he afterwards justified by the well-known maxim, "Point de zèle, Monsieur!"†

II.

It was not for want of zeal, however, that this second mission, notwithstanding the King's letter, was even more unsuccessful than the first; but for another very good reason: viz., that whatever MM. de Chauvelin or Talleyrand might say and do in London, the turn which affairs were taking more and more decidedly at Paris was such as could not but destroy the credit of any agent of the French government.

The Legislative Assembly had been especially framed to place power in the hands of the middle classes, and was intended to be alike hostile to the nobles and the mob.

But the middle class, the most weighty auxiliary that a government can have, is rarely found capable of directing a government. Vergniaud and Roland, who were on this occasion its organs, lost week by week their prestige; the rabble, which forced the palace on the 20th of June, began day by day to be more convinced of its power. What authority remained to the representative of a sove-

* M. de Talleyrand amuses himself, M. de Chauvelin grumbles, and M. de Roveray bargains.

† No zeal, sir.

reign whose habitation was not secure and whose person was insulted?

Amidst such events the Revolution lost in England most of its early patrons. Fox, Sheridan, and a few of their particular clique, formed the sole associates of the French embassy; and Dumont, whom I again quote as a trustworthy witness, describes a scene at Ranelagh which testifies the general unpopularity in England of every Frenchman having an official position.

"At our arrival we perceived a buzzing sound of voices saying, 'Here comes the French embassy!' Regards, evincing curiosity but not amity, were directed at once towards our battalion, for we were eight or ten, and we soon ascertained that we should not want space for our promenade, every one retreated to the right and left at our approach, as if they were afraid that there was contagion in our very atmosphere."

M. de Talleyrand, seeing that all attempt to negotiate under such circumstances was vain, returned to Paris just previous to the 10th August, and was there when the wavering and unfortunate Louis XVI. lost his crown by a combination between the Girondins and the Jacobins: the first wishing to have the appearance of a victory, the latter aiming at the reality. M. de Talleyrand had been the object of attack when the united Republicans were mustering their forces for the combat, and he felt himself by no means secure after their triumph. The popular movement had now in truth swept over all the ideas and all the individuals it had commenced with; its next excesses were likely to be still more terrible than the last, and the wary diplomatist thought that the best thing he could do was to get back to England as soon as possible.

III.

He got his passport from Danton, then in the provisional government, and whom he knew as an early partisan of the Duc d'Orléans; and he used, when last in London, to tell a story as to the manner in which he obtained it by a timely smile at a joke, which the jocular and truculent tribune had just passed on another petitioner. But I

shall have presently to allude further to this passport. The bearer of it but just escaped in time.

Among the papers found in the famous iron cupboard, discovered at the Tuileries, was the following letter from M. de Laporte, the intendant of the King's household, to whom I have already alluded as having communicated the wishes of the King as to M. de Talleyrand's first mission, and dated the 22nd of April, 1791 :

" SIRE,

" J'adresse à Votre Majesté une lettre écrite avant-hier, et que je n'ai reçue qu'hier après-midi ; elle est de l'évêque d'Autun qui paraît désirer servir Votre Majesté. Il m'a fait dire qu'elle pouvait faire l'essai de son zèle, et de son crédit, et lui désigner les points où elle désirait l'employer."*

The original communication, however, here alluded to, was not discovered : and M. de Talleyrand himself boldly denied that it had ever been written. It is possible that he knew it was destroyed (it is said that he purchased it from Danton), but at all events, various concomitant circumstances seemed to prove that he had been more in the interest and confidence of the Court than he could now safely avow ; and the Convention issuing and maintaining a decree of accusation against him, he was unable to return to France on the 8th April, 1793, which he ought to have done in order not to be comprised in the general list of *émigrés*, and was thus forced to remain in England.

The first thing he had done on arriving there was to address the following letter to Lord Grenville :—

* " SIRE,—I address to your Majesty a letter written the day before yesterday, and which I only received yesterday after mid-day. It is from the Bishop of Autun, who seems desirous to serve your Majesty. He had it conveyed to me that the King might make a trial of his zeal and influence, and indicate to him the points on which he could be employed."

"18th September, Kensington Square.*

"My Lord,

"I have the honour of informing you that I arrived in England two days ago. The relations which I had the advantage of having with you, during my stay in London, make this a duty to me.

"I should reproach myself for not promptly performing it, and for not offering my first homage to the minister whose mind has shown itself on a level with the great events of the present times, and who has always manifested views so pure, and a love of liberty so enlightened.

"On my first voyages, the King had intrusted me with a mission to which I attached the greatest value. I wished to hasten the moment of the prosperity of France, and consequently connect her, if possible, with England.

"I hardly, indeed, dared to hope for such a blessing in our circumstances, but I could not resolve not to make exertions for attaining it.

"The assurance you vouchsafed to give us of the neutrality of your government at the epoch of the war, appeared to me most auspicious.

"Since that moment, everything has cruelly changed

* "18 septembre, Kensington Square.

"My Lord,

"J'ai l'honneur de vous informer que je suis arrivé en Angleterre il y a deux jours. Les rapports que j'ai eu l'avantage d'avoir avec vous pendant mon séjour à Londres m'en font un devoir.

"Je me reprocherais de ne pas m'en acquitter promptement et de ne pas offrir mes premiers hommages au ministre dont l'esprit m'a paru au niveau des grands événements de cette époque, et qui a toujours manifesté des vues si pures, et un amour éclairé de la vraie liberté.

"A mes premiers voyages j'étais chargé par le roi d'une mission à laquelle j'attachais le plus grand prix. Je voulais hâter le moment de la prospérité de la France, et par conséquent l'attacher, s'il était possible, à l'Angleterre.

"J'osais à peine, il est vrai, espérer tant de bonheur dans nos circonstances, mais je ne pouvais me résoudre à ne pas faire des efforts pour y parvenir.

"L'assurance que vos daignâtes nous donner de la neutralité de votre gouvernement à l'époque de la guerre me parut un présage très-heureux.

"Depuis ce moment tout est cruellement changé parmi nous, et

amongst us; and although nothing can ever unrivet my heart or my wishes from France, and though I live in the hope of returning thither as soon as the laws shall have resumed their reign, I must tell you, my Lord, and I am desirous that you should know, that I have at this time *absolutely no kind of mission in England*, that I have come here solely for the purpose of seeking repose, and the enjoyment of liberty in the midst of its true friends.

"If, however, my Lord Grenville should wish to know what France is at this moment, what are the different parties that disturb her, and what is the new provisional executive power, and lastly, what is permitted to conjecture of the terrible and frightful events of which I have almost been an eye-witness, I shall be happy to give such information, and to avail myself of the occasion to renew the expression of the respectful sentiments with which I am, my Lord, your most humble and obedient servant,

"TALLEYRAND-PÉRIGORD."

There is no trace of Lord Grenville's having taken any notice of this communication.

Nothing, however, was done for some time to disturb the fugitive's residence amongst us.

M. de Chauvelin was sent away by the British government after the execution of Louis XVI. on the 24th of January, 1793, and it was not till the 28th of January,

quoique rien ne puisse jamais détaeher mon eœur ni mes vœux de la Franee, et que mon espoir soit d'y retourner aussitôt que les lois y auront repris leur empire, je dois vous dire, mylord, et je tiens beaueoup à ee que vous saehiez que je n'ai absolument aueune espèce de mission en Angleterre, que j'y suis venu uniquement pour y ehercher la paix et pour y jouir de la liberté au milieu de ses véritables amis.

"Si pourtant mylord Grenville désirait eonnaître ee que c'est que la Franee en ee moment, quels sont les différents partis qui l'agitent, et quel est le nouveau pouvoir exéeutif provisoire, et enfin ee qu'il est permis de conjeeturer des terribles et épouvantables événements dont j'ai été presque le témoin oculaire, je serais eharmé de le lui apprendre et de trouver eette oeeasion de lui renouveler l'assuranee des sentiments de respeet avee lesquels je suis, mylord, votre très-humble, et très-obéissant serviteur,

"TALLEYRAND-PÉRIGORD."

1794, that M. de Talleyrand received an order, under the powers conferred by the Alien Bill, to quit England. He wrote a letter, dated 30th, to Lord Grenville, in which he begs to be allowed to justify himself from any false accusation, declares that if his thoughts have been often turned to France, it has only been to deplore its disasters, repeats that he has no correspondence with the French government, represents the calamitous condition he should be reduced to if driven from our shores, and finally appeals to the British minister's humanity as well as justice.

IV.

M. DE TALLEYRAND'S DECLARATION.*

"My respect for the King's Council, and my confidence in its justice, induce me to lay before it a personal declaration more detailed than that which, as a stranger, I am bound to lay before a magistrate.

"I came to London towards the end of January, 1792, intrusted by the French government with a mission to the government of England. The object of this mission, at a moment when all Europe seemed to declare itself against France, was to induce the government of England not to renounce the sentiments of friendship and good neighbourhood of which it had given constant proofs towards France during the course of the Revolution. The King, especially, whose most ardent wishes were the preservation of a peace which seemed to him as useful to Europe in general as to

* "*Déclaration de Monsieur de Talleyrand.*

"Mon respect pour le conseil du roi, et ma confiance en sa justice m'engagent à lui présenter une déclaration personnelle plus détaillée que celle que je vois comme étranger présenter au magistrat.

"Je suis venu à Londres vers la fins de janvier 1792, chargé par le gouvernement français d'une mission auprès du gouvernement d'Angleterre. Cette mission avait pour objet, dans un moment où toute l'Europe paraissait se déclarer contre la France, d'engager le gouvernement d'Angleterre de ne point renoncer aux sentiments d'amitié et de bon voisinage qu'il avait montré constamment en faveur de la France pendant le cours de la Révolution. Le roi surtout, dont le vœux le plus ardent était le maintien d'une paix qui lui paraissait aussi utile à l'Europe en général qu'à la France en particulier, le roi attachait un grand prix à la neutralité et à l'amitié

France particularly, attached great value to the neutrality, and to the friendship of England, and he had ordered M. de Montmorin, who retained his confidence, and M. de Laporte, to acquaint me with his wishes on this subject. I was, moreover, instructed by the King's ministers to make to the government of England proposals referring to the commercial interests of both nations. The constitution had not allowed the King, while honouring me with his commands, to invest me with a public capacity. This want of an official title was held by my Lord Grenville to be an obstacle to any political conference. I demanded, in consequence, my recall, and I returned to France. A minister plenipotentiary was sent some time after; the King commanded me to assist in the negotiations, and informed his Britannic Majesty of this by a private letter. I remained attached to the duty the King had imposed upon me until the epoch of the 10th of August, 1792. At that time I was in Paris, where I had been called by the minister of foreign affairs. After having been for more than a month without being able to obtain a passport, and having remained exposed during all this time, both as an administrator of the department of Paris, and as a member of the Constituent Assembly, to all the dangers

de l'Angleterre, et il avait chargé Monsieur de Montmorin qui conservait sa confiance, et Monsieur de Laporte, de me témoigner son désir à ce sujet. J'étais chargé de plus par les ministres du roi de faire au gouvernement d'Angleterre des propositions relatives à l'intérêt commercial des deux nations. La constitution n'avait pas permis au roi en me chargeant de ses ordres, de me revêtir d'un caractère public. Ce défaut de titre officiel me fut opposé par mylord Grenville comme un obstacle à toute conférence politique. Je demandai en conséquence mon rappel à Monsieur de Laporte, et je retournai en France. Un ministre plénipotentiaire fut envoyé quelque temps après; le roi me chargea d'en seconder les travaux, et en fit part à S. M. Britannique par une lettre particulière. Je suis resté attaché au devoir que le roi m'avait imposé jusqu'à l'époque du 10 août, 1792. J'étais alors à Paris où j'avais été appelé par le ministre des affaires étrangères. Après avoir été plus d'un mois sans pouvoir obtenir de passeport et être resté exposé pendant tout ce temps, et comme administrateur du département de Paris, et comme membre de l'Assemblée Constituante à tous les dangers qui peuvent menacer la vie et la liberté, j'ai pu enfin sortir de Paris vers le milieu de septembre, et je suis venu en Angleterre jouir de la paix

which can threaten life and liberty, I was at length able to leave the French capital about the middle of September, and I have reached England to enjoy peace and personal safety under the shelter of a constitution protecting liberty and property. There I have been living, as I always have done, a stranger to all discussions and all interests of party, and having nothing to fear before just men from the publicity of any of my political opinions, or from the knowledge of any of my actions. Besides the motives of safety and liberty which brought me back to England, there existed another reason, doubtless a very legitimate one, which was some personal business, and the early sale of a rather considerable library which I possessed in Paris, and which I had brought over to London.

"I must add, that having become in some measure a stranger to France, where I have maintained no other relations than those connected with my personal affairs, and an ancient friendship, I cannot approach my own country save by those ardent wishes which I form for the revival of its liberty and of its happiness.

"I thought that in circumstances where ill-will may avail itself of various prejudices in order to turn them to the profit of those enmities due to the first periods of our revolution, it was carrying out the views of the King's

et de la sûreté personnelle à l'abri d'une constitution protectrice de la liberté et de la propriété. J'y existe, comme je l'ai toujours été, étranger à toutes les discussions et à tous les intérêts de parti; et n'ayant pas plus à redouter devant les hommes justes la publicité d'une seule de mes opinions politiques que la connaissance d'une seule de mes actions. Outre les motifs de sûreté et de liberté qui m'ont ramené en Angleterre, il est une autre raison, très-légitime sans doute, c'est la suite de quelques affaires personnelles et la vente prochaine d'une bibliothèque assez considérable que j'avais à Paris, et que j'ai transportée à Londres.

"Je dois ajoutir que devenu en quelque sorte étranger à la France, où je n'ai conservé d'autres rapports que ceux de mes affaires personnelles, et d'une ancienne amitié je ne puis me rapprocher de ma patrie que par les vœux ardents que je fais pour le rétablissement de sa liberté et de son bonheur.

"J'ai cru que dans des circonstances où la malveillance pouvait se servir de quelques préventions pour les faire tourner au profit d'inimitiés dues aux premières époques de notre Révolution, c'était remplir les vues du conseil du roi que de lui offrir dans une déclara-

Council, to offer it a precise exposition of the motives for my stay in England, and an assured and irrevocable guarantee of my respect for its constitution and its laws.

"TALLEYRAND.

"January 1, 1793."

V.

Nothing can be more clear and precise than this declaration, but it was ineffectual, and its writer now sailed for the United States, carrying with him letters of recommendation from different members of the Opposition, and, amongst others, from the Marquis of Lansdowne, with whose intimacy, as I have said, he had been especially honoured. Washington replied:

"30th August, 1794.

"MY LORD,

"I had the pleasure to receive the introduction from your Lordship delivered to me by M. de Talleyrand-Périgord. I regret very much that considerations of a political nature, and which you will easily understand, have not permitted me as yet to testify all the esteem I entertain for his personal character and your recommendation.

"I hear that the general reception he has met with is such as to console him, as far as the state of our society will permit, for what he abandoned on quitting Europe. Time will naturally be favourable to him wherever he may be, and one must believe that it will elevate a man of his talents and merit above the transitory disadvantages which result from differences as to politics in revolutionary times.

"WASHINGTON."

VI.

It will be seen from the foregoing communication that M. de Talleyrand was spoken of with some respect, and that his reception in the United States had been rather flattering than otherwise. But the French name generally

tion précise un exposé des motifs de mon séjour en Angleterre, et un garant assuré et irrévocable de mon respect pour la constitution et pour les lois.

"1er janvier, 1793." "TALLEYRAND.

had lost its popularity; for Lafayette was an exile in the prisons of Olmütz, and the bloodthirsty violence of the Convention and the intrigues of its agents were in nowise congenial with American feelings. The moment, however, was one of considerable excitement; the able men who had hitherto formed round their venerable president a united government were splitting up into opposing parties; the treaty with England was under dispute; and M. de Talleyrand, intimate with Jefferson, was active, it is said, in adding to the prevailing agitation, and endeavouring to thwart the policy of the government which had lately banished him from its shores. His endeavours, however, were unsuccessful; and becoming heartily wearied with his new place of exile, he employed what capital he had been able to save from his varied career in fitting out a ship, in which, accompanied by M. de Beaumetz, like himself a former member of the National Assembly, he was about to sail for the East Indies.

But during the years that had elapsed since his quitting Paris, events which had been rushing on with a demoniacal rapidity through almost every horror and every crime (each phase in this terrible history being marked by the murder of one set of assassins and the momentary rule of another), had arrived at a new crisis.

The Gironde, whom I left trembling and triumphant on the 10th of August, had been soon after strangled in the giant grasp of Danton. Danton, too indolent and self-confident to be a match for his more cool and ambitious coadjutor, had bent his lofty head beneath the guillotine, to which he had delivered so many victims; and, finally, Robespierre himself had just perished by the hands of men whom fear had rendered bold, and experience brought in some degree to reason, inasmuch as that they at last felt the necessity of re-establishing some of those laws by which alone society can be preserved.

M. de Talleyrand on learning these occurrences determined on abandoning his commercial enterprises and striving once more for power and fortune amidst the shifting scenes of public affairs.

And here, as often, Fortune favoured him; for the vessel in which he was about to embark, sailing with his

friend, was never afterwards seen or heard of. All his efforts were now bent on returning to his native country, where he had many active in his behalf. Amongst the most influential of these was a remarkable woman, of whose talents we have but a faint idea from her works, which—though bearing witness to an ardent imagination and a powerful intellect—hardly give evidence of that natural and startling eloquence which sparkled in her conversation. The daughter of Necker, of whom I speak, just awakening from the horrors of a nightmare that had absorbed almost every sentiment but fear, was at this period the centre of a circle, in which figured the most captivating women and the ablest men, rushing with a kind of wild joy back to those charms of society which of late years had been banished from all places, except perhaps the prisons, wherein alone, during what has been emphatically called the "Reign of Terror," any records of the national gaiety seem to have been preserved.

Amongst the intimates at Madame de Staël's house was the surviving Chénier (Joseph-Marie), who on the 18th of Fructidor addressed the Convention, after the return of M. de Montesquieu had just been allowed, in the following characteristic terms:

"I have a similar permission to demand for one of the most distinguished members of the Constituent Assembly —M. de Talleyrand-Périgord, the famous Bishop of Autun. Our different ministers of Paris bear witness to his services. I have in my hands a *memoir of which the duplicate exists in the papers of Danton;* the date of this memoir is 25th of November, 1792, and it proves that M. de Talleyrand was actually occupied in the affairs of the Republic when he was proscribed by it. Thus, persecuted by Marat and Robespierre, he was also banished by Pitt from England; but the place of exile that he chose was the country of Franklin, where, in contemplating the imposing spectacle of a free people, he might await the time when France should have judges and not murderers; a Republic, and not anarchy called laws!"

How are we to reconcile this declaration with M. de Talleyrand's solemn protestations to Lord Grenville?

How could M. de Talleyrand have been writing memoirs

to Danton and yet have come over to England, "solely for the purpose of seeking repose?"

That the passport to which we have drawn attention bore out M. Chénier's affirmation *allant à Londres par nos ordres*—"going to London by our orders"—is certain, for M. de Talleyrand afterwards confirmed this fact in a pamphlet which we shall have by-and-by to notice. But of the memoir we can learn nothing further.

The friends of M. de Talleyrand say that probably it never existed, or that, if it did, it could only be a paper of no importance, and not such a one as the English government would have objected to. They add that the form given to the passport was the only one Danton could have ventured to give without danger from the provisional council; that the English government must have been acquainted with it; and that M. de Talleyrand merely availed himself of it, and pretended that it placed him in the position of a French agent, when this was necessary to procure his return to France or to defend himself against the charge of emigration.

I must leave it to his autobiography to clear up whatever is obscure in this transaction; but at present it seems to justify the French lady, who, when the conversation once turned on the agreeable qualities of the Abbé de Périgord, acknowledged it would be difficult to refuse him her favours, but that it would be impossible to give him her confidence.

VII.

At all events, Chénier's pleading was successful. The permission to return was granted; and, accordingly, M. de Talleyrand retraversed the Atlantic, and, having been driven on the English coast by stress of weather, arrived in the month of July, 1795, at Hamburg, then the place of refuge for almost all *émigrés*, especially Orleanists, as well as of Irish malcontents: Madame de Genlis, Madame de Flahaut, Lord Edward FitzGerald, &c.

The condition of Europe may be briefly described at this time by saying that the French arms had been generally successful. Belgium was taken; the expedition under the Duke of York beaten and repulsed; Holland

had become an allied and submissive Republic; on most of the towns of the Rhine floated the tricolour flag; Spain had sued for and obtained peace; Prussia was neutral. The expedition to Quiberon had been a complete failure; and although the French generals, Pichegru and Jourdan, began to experience some reverses, the Directory was powerful enough, both abroad and at home, to justify the support of prudent adherents.

M. de Talleyrand consequently saw no objection to serving it. But before appearing at Paris, he judged it well to stay a short time at Berlin, which, being then the central point of observation, would make his arrival in France more interesting.

After this brief preparation, he appeared in the French capital, and found his name one of the most popular in the drawing-rooms (he never had the popularity of the streets), in that capricious city. The ladies formerly in fashion spoke of his wit and address from memory; those of more recent vogue, from curiosity; the great mass of the Convention were well disposed to have a "*grand seigneur*" in their suite; the "*grands seigneurs*" who still remained in France, to have one of their own body in power; all the political leaders recognised his ability, and were anxious to know to what particular section he would attach himself. Even among the "*savants*" he had a party; for he had been named, though absent, member of the Institute, which had recently been formed on the basis that he had laid down for it. Above all things, he was well known as a liberal, and undefiled by the bloody orgies of freedom. Under such circumstances, he again appeared on the stage of pleasure and affairs.

VIII.

The first movement of all parties after the death of Robespierre had been, as I have said, against the continuance of the murderous system connected with his name; but it was difficult to combine into any one government or policy the various parties that were triumphant; that is, the violent Democrats, who had risen against their chief;—the more moderate Republicans,

who had been rather spectators than actors during the domination of the Convention;—and the Constitutionalists of the National and Legislative Assemblies. The reaction once begun, extended by degrees, until it provoked conflicts between extremes; and it was only after a series of struggles, now against the Jacobins and now against the disguised Royalists, that a sort of middle party formed the Constitution of year III., which was founded on the principle of universal tolerance; assuring, however, to the Conventionalists a supremacy, by exacting that two-thirds of the new assemblies should be chosen from amongst them. These new assemblies were of two kinds, both elected: the one called "the ancients," a sort of senate, which had the power of refusing laws; the second, the Five Hundred, which had the power of initiating laws. The executive was entrusted to a Directory, which, in order to guard against a despot, consisted of five members: Carnot, with whose republican severity M. de Talleyrand had little sympathy; Laréveillère-Lepaux, whose religious reveries he had turned into ridicule by christening the "Théophilantropes" (a sect of deists whom Laréveillère patronised) *Les filoux en troupe;* Letourneur, an engineer officer, who had little or no influence; Rewbell, a lawyer, and a man of character and ability, not ill-disposed to him; and Barras.

This last man, at the time I am speaking of the most powerful member of the Directory, was the sort of person who frequently rises to a greater height in civil commotions than any apparent merit seems to warrant. Clever, without great ability; intriguing, without great address; bold and resolute on any critical occasions, but incapable of any sustained energy; of gentle birth, though not of any great historical family,—he had acquired his influence by two or three acts of courage and decision; and was forgiven the crime of being a noble, in consideration of the virtue of being a regicide. Having been chosen by his colleagues, as the man best acquainted with and accustomed to the world, to represent the government with society,—he sustained this position by easy manners and a sort of court with which he contrived to surround himself; a court

containing all the fragments of the old society that were yet to be found mingled with affairs.

In the south of Europe, and in the East, many such adventurers have risen to great fortunes and retained them. In the north, and (strange to say) especially among the changing and brilliant people of France, more solid qualities, and a more stern and equable character, seem essentially necessary for command. Richelieu, Mazarin, Louis XI., Louis XIV., even Robespierre, differing in everything else, were all remarkable for a kind of resolute, every-day energy, for a spirit of order and system which the voluptuary of the Luxembourg wanted. His drawing-room, however, was a theatre where the accomplished gentleman of former times was still able to shine, and his prejudices, though he affected democratic principles in order to shield himself from the charge of being born an aristocrat, were all in favour of the ex-noble. To Barras, therefore, M. de Talleyrand attached himself.

IX.

The society of Paris was never more "*piquante*," if I may borrow an expression from the language of the country of which I am speaking, than at this moment. Nobody was rich. Pomp and ceremony were banished; few private houses were open: a great desire for amusement existed; there were no pretensions to rank, for who would have ventured to boast of his birth? There was no drawing into sets or *cliques*, for such would still have been considered as conspiracies. People lived together in public fêtes, in public gardens, at theatres, at subscription-balls, like those of Marbeuf, where the grocer's wife and the monseigneur's danced in the same quadrille: each being simply qualified by the title of "*citoyenne*." The only real distinction was that of manners. An active, artful, popular man of the world, amidst such a confused assemblage of all orders, bent on being amused, had full play for his social and political qualities. But this was not all; with the taste for gaiety had also returned the taste for letters. Here, again, M. de Talleyrand found means to excite attention. I have said that, during his

absence from France he had been elected a member of the National Institute, which owed its origin, as I have noticed, to the propositions he had laid before the National Assembly just previous to its dissolution. He had also been chosen its secretary; and it was in this capacity that he now addressed to the moral and scientific class, to which he belonged, two memoirs: the one on the commercial relations between England and the United States, and the other on colonies generally. There are few writings of this kind that contain so many just ideas in so small a compass. In the first, the author gives a general description of the state of American society, the calm character, the various and peculiar habits, the Saxon laws, and religious feelings of that rising community. He then shows, what was at that time little understood, that the mother country had gained more than she had lost by the separation; and that the wants of Americans connected them with English interests, while their language, education, history, and laws, gave them feelings, which, if properly cultivated, would be—English.

The memoir on colonisation, however, is even superior to the preceding one; it is in this memoir on colonisation that M. de Talleyrand points out—for he even then perceived what has since been gradually taking place—the impossibility of long continuing slave labour or of maintaining those colonies which required it. He foresaw that such colonies existed in the face of sentiments which must, whether rightly or wrongly, in a few years sweep them away. He looked out for other settlements to supply their place; and Egypt and the African coast are the spots to which, with a singular prescience, he directed the attention of his country; whose inhabitants he describes, from their sense of fatigue, from their desire of excitement, and in many instances, from their disappointment and discontent, to be peculiarly in want of new regions of rest, of enterprise, and of change.

"The art of putting the right men in the right places" (the phrase is not, I may observe *en passant*, of to-day's invention), he observes profoundly, "is perhaps the first in the science of government; but," he adds, "the art of

finding a satisfactory position for the discontented is the most difficult.

"To present distant scenes to their imaginations, views agreeable to their thoughts and desires, is," he says, "I think, one of the solutions of this social problem."*

In three weeks after the reading of this memoir, M. de Talleyrand accepted the office of minister of foreign affairs.

X.

The immediate cause of his being named to replace Charles Delacroix in this post, used to be thus related by himself:—"I had gone to dine at a friend's on the banks of the Seine, with Madame de Staël, Barras, and a small party which frequently met. A young friend of Barras, who was with us, went out to bathe before dinner, and was drowned. The director, tenderly attached to him, was in the greatest affliction. I consoled him (I was used to that sort of thing in early life), and accompanied him in his carriage back to Paris. The ministry of foreign affairs immediately after this became vacant; Barras knew I wanted it, and through his interest I procured it."

But this was not the sole cause of his selection. The state of affairs was at this time critical; the reaction, produced by the horrors of the democrats, became stronger and stronger under a government of indulgence.

In proportion as the ordinary relations of society recommenced, the feeling against those who had disturbed and for a time destroyed them, became more and more bitter. At last the hatred of the Robespierreans verged towards an inclination for the Royalists; and Pichegru, the president of the Assembly of the Five Hundred, and a general at that time in great repute, was already in correspondence with Louis XVIII.

The Directory itself was divided. Carnot, an impracticable man of genius and a violent Republican, sided with

* "L'art de mettre des hommes à leur place est le premier de la science du gouvernement; mais celui de trouver la place des mécontents est à coup sûr le plus difficile; et présenter à leur imagination des lointains, des perspectives où puissent se prendre leurs pensées et leurs désirs, est, je crois, une des solutions de cette difficulté sociale."

the opposition from personal dislike to his colleagues and from a belief that any new convulsion would end by the triumph of his own principles. He carried with him Barthélemy, the successor to Letourneur, who had lost his place in the Directory by the ballot, which was periodically to eliminate it. Rewbell and Laréveillère-Lepaux ranged themselves with Barras, who, satisfied with his position, and having to keep it against the two extreme parties, was glad to get into the ministry, as attached to him, a man of well-known ability and resolution.

Besides, the negotiation with Great Britain at Lille, which not unnaturally followed the defeat of all her continental allies, suggested the appointment of a more distinguished diplomatist than M. Delacroix, who presided at that time over the department to which M. de Talleyrand was appointed.

The new minister soon justified the choice that had been made of him. His eye took in at once the situation in which Barras found himself,—a situation that singularly resembled one in our own times. The majority of the executive was on one side, and the majority of the legislative bodies on the other.

The question was agitated by the Assembly as to whether it should not take the first step, and, without regard for the constitution, obtain possession by any means of the executive power. General Pichegru hesitated, as did General Changarnier after him.

Talleyrand advised Barras not to hesitate. He did not; and, taking the command of the troops in virtue of his office, seized the chief men amongst his opponents, to whatever party they belonged. Carnot, Barthélemy, and Pichegru were amongst the number, and, though Carnot escaped by flight, M. de Talleyrand equally got rid of an enemy, and the ardent Republicans lost a leader.

XI.

The worst effect of this *coup-d'état* was the interruption of the negotiations at Lille, and of the arrangements which Monsieur Maret was on the point of concluding, which Talleyrand had himself favoured, but which were impos-

sible to a government that had now to seek popularity as a protection to usurpation.

The idea of peace with England being thus abandoned, M. de Talleyrand addressed a circular to his agents, which, considering the time at which it was written and the position which its writer held at that moment, is a model of tact and ability.

He describes England as the sole enemy of France. He dates her power and prestige from the times of Cromwell and the spirit and energy which liberty inspires. He bases the power and prestige which France ought then to hold on that same liberty, and invokes the victories which she had just gained. He describes in a way that suited his purpose the manner in which Great Britain had acquired her influence, and accuses her of having abused it.

He shows to his agents the immense importance of an intelligent diplomacy. He warns them against shocking the habits and ideas of the nations to which they are sent; he tells them to be active without being agitators. He instils into them the conviction of the greatness of France and the necessity of making that greatness acknowledged and sympathised with.

He counsels them to avoid little tricks, and to evince that confidence in the strength and continuance of the Republic, which would inspire such confidence in others.

He points out how all the misfortunes and changes in the government of France had been brought about by the feeble and apathetic position which she had held abroad during the reign of the later princes of the House of Bourbon; and, finally, he assures them of his support, and adds that he appreciates highly the services which their talents may render to their country.

It is in this manner that great ministers form able agents.

In the meantime the treaty of Campo Formio had established peace in Italy and Germany on conditions advantageous to France, though, by the cession of Venice to Austria, she abdicated the cause for which she had hitherto pretended to fight.

Bonaparte, to whom this peace was due, now visited Paris, and saw much of M. de Talleyrand, who courted

him with assiduity, as if foreseeing his approaching destiny. But the time for a closer alliance was not yet arrived: Napoleon, indeed, was not himself prepared for the serious meditation of the design which he subsequently executed. Vague ideas of conquest and greatness floated before his eyes, and the gigantic empires that courage and genius have frequently founded in the East, were probably more familiar with his thoughts than any tyranny to be established in his own country (May, 1798). He set out for Egypt, then, where he thought of realising his splendid dreams, and where the Directory, following a traditional policy not yet abandoned, thought of striking a desperate blow against the ancient enemy and rival with whom alone she had now to maintain a conflict. With him seemed to depart the fortunes of his country. A new European coalition broke out with the murder of the French plenipotentiaries at Rastadt, and divisions of all kinds manifested themselves in France. The victories of the allies on the Upper Rhine and in Italy increased these divisions, and added to the strength of the democratic party, to which the overthrow of Pichegru and his associates had already—contrary to the intention of Barras, who, as I have said, had wished to maintain a middle course—given an increased influence. The loss of Rewbell, whose energy the Democrats dreaded, and whose seat in the Directory became legitimately vacant, gave strength to their desires, the more especially as Sieyès, who replaced Rewbell, entered the executive with his usual mania of propounding some new constitution.

M. de Talleyrand, attacked as a noble and an *émigré*, resigned his department, and published a defence of his conduct, which is remarkable, and of which I venture to give, in an abbreviated and free translation, some of the most salient points:—

* * * * *

"I am accused of creating the league of kings against our Republic! I! If I have been known for one thing more than another, it has been for my constant desire for an honourable peace; the great result that will alone give solidity to our institutions! So it is I, then, who

seek to augment our enemies, exasperate our friends, break our treaties, indispose neutrals, and menace other states with principles they do not wish to accept—and who make this accusation? They who are always stirring up discord, invoking the horrors of war; they, whose aim it is to produce revolutions throughout the world, who address to every power by turn the most injurious, absurd, and impolitic reproaches; who employ the press to circulate the assertion that monarchies and republics are natural enemies; and who left to me the task of calming the governments whom they kept in a state of constant disquietude and alarm.

* * * * *

"It is true that Austria, after the treaty of Campo Formio, though that treaty was favourable to her, began new combinations and alliances against us—and that England and Russia engaged her in their designs. If I had been ignorant of their intrigues or hostile preparations, if I had not informed the government of them, then, indeed, I might justly be accused. But, not only do I defy any one to show that I ever neglected my duty for a single day, it so happens that five months before the entry of the Russians into Italy, *I procured a copy of the combined plans of Russia and Austria*, and delivered them to General Joubert, who has frequently declared that they were of the utmost utility in his operations.

* * * * *

"But I am a Constitutionalist of 1791 (a title I glory in), and, consequently, I offer no guarantee to the Republic.

"If it were not true that a patriot of 1789, who has not hesitated to take his oath to the Republic, and frequently repeated it, has no favour to expect from a French government that is not republican;—it is certain either that the Republic will establish itself, or that it will perish in a general confusion, or that it will be again submitted to a royalty furious and revengeful. From the Confusionists and the Royalists it appears to me that I have little to expect. Is this no guarantee?

"But—I am an *émigré!* an *émigré!* When the first republican authority—the National Convention—declared

with unanimity, at the period of its greatest independence and its greatest force, that my name should be effaced from the list of *émigrés*, I was sent to London on the 7th of September, 1792, by the executive government. My passport, delivered to me by the provisional council, is signed by its six members, Lebrun, Servan, Danton, Clavière, Roland, Monge. It was in these terms:

"'Laissez passer Ch. Maurice Talleyrand, allant à Londres *par nos ordres*.'

[M. de Talleyrand here repeats what was said by Chénier.]

"Thus I was authorised to quit France, and to remain out of it until the orders I received were revoked, which they never were. But not wishing to prolong my absence, I asked, the instant that the Convention recovered the liberty which had been for a time suppressed, to return to my native land, or to be judged if I had committed any offence that merited exile. My request was granted. I left France then by orders which I received from the confidence of the French government. I re-entered it directly it was possible for me to do so with the consent of the French government. What trace is there here of emigration?

* * * * *

"Well, then, it was I 'who made Malmesbury, who had been sent about his business by Charles Delacroix, return—not, it is true, to Paris, but—to Lille, the centre of our military Boulevards.'

"What is the truth? On the 13th Prairial, year V., Lord Grenville proposed to enter into negotiation; on the 16th the proposal was accepted; on the 25th Charles Delacroix sent passports to England, and fixed on Lille as the place of negotiation.

"On the 29th Lord Grenville accepts Lille as the place of negotiation, and announces the choice of Lord Malmesbury as the English negotiator. On the 2nd Messidor, the Directory sanctions this arrangement. On the 28th the conferences commence at Lille, and it was not till the 28th I was named minister.

* * * * *

"I am attacked for all the acts of the ex-Directors. My accusers know that, if my opinion differed from theirs, I should not have charged them with errors when they were in place, and still less should I do so now, when they are stripped of power, and that all I desire to remember is their kindness and confidence.

"It is for this reason that in my report to the legislative body I only glanced rapidly over the fact that all that was to be decided relative to Italy and Switzerland, during my ministry, was decided without my knowledge and concurrence. I could have added that, to the changes operated in the Cisalpine Republic, I was entirely a stranger; that, when the citizen Rivaud was sent to that Republic as ambassador, I was asked for letters of credence in blank, and that I only learnt of his mission after it had been in activity. But my enemies do not pause here.

"Ignorance and hatred seem to dispute as to which should accumulate the most falsehoods and absurdities against my reputation.

"I am reproached for not having invaded Hanover: but if I had advocated carrying the war into that country in spite of the neutral line which protects it, how much more just and more violent would have been the attacks on me for having violated that neutrality, and thereby roused Prussia against us!

"Then it is said I should have assailed Portugal! And if I had done so and been opposed by Spain, and thus lost an alliance so useful to us, what reproaches should I not have encountered!

"But I did not sufficiently encourage letters of marque against England. Five hundred and forty-five privateers fell into the hands of the English, from the commencement of the war till the year VI. of the Republic. The number of prisoners in England amounts to thirty-five thousand; these cost fifteen millions to support on an enemy's territory, and it is principally owing to letters of marque that we owe this result.

"I will say no more; but surely I have said enough to inspire the most discouraging reflections as to that moral

disorganization—as to that aberration of mind—as to that overthrow of all reasonable ideas—as to that want of good faith, of the love of truth, of justice, of esteem for oneself and others—which are the distinguishing characteristics of those publications which it is difficult to leave unanswered, and humiliating to reply to."*

* * * * *

We find, from the above, that the ex-minister did not scruple to make his defence an attack, and to treat with sarcasm and disdain the party by which he had been ejected; but at the same time that he denounces the follies of the over-zealous Republicans, he declares himself unequivocally for a republic: and justifying what he had done, ridiculing what he had been condemned for not doing, he throws with some address the blame of much that had been done against his opinion on those Directors still in power.

What he says as to the negotiations at Lille shows sufficiently the difficulties, after the 18th of Fructidor, of any peace with England; and a passage that I have quoted, and to which I had previously alluded, bears out what had been said by Chénier as to the famous passport.

In these "Eclaircissements," however, the ex-minister aimed more at putting himself in a good position for future events, than at referring to past ones.

He would hardly, indeed, have fixed his signature to so bold a publication if his enemies had been firm in their places: but already the Directory was tottering to its fall.

XII.

The great evil of any constitution, formed for a particular time and not the result of continual adaptation to the wants of various epochs, is that it is altogether of one character and is almost immediately out of date. The constitution of the Directory, framed after a period of great popular violence and individual despotism, was framed upon the principle of so nicely checking every action in the

* (XII.) Eclaircissements donnés par le citoyen Talleyrand à ses concitoyens.

State, that there should be no honest means for any individual gaining great power or distinction. But when the influence of individuals in a government is over-zealously kept down, the influence of government collapses, and becomes unequal to restrain the agitation of a society more ardent and ambitious than itself.

Thus, during four years, the Constitution of the year III. was preserved in name by a series of actual infringements of it. Now, the Directory checked the councils by transporting the opposition; now, the opposition put down the Directory by compelling an unpopular director to resign his office; and now again, the absence of all laws against the license of the press was compensated for by declaring hostile journalists enemies of the State, and punishing a clever article as an insurrection.

Nor was this all: where civil ability can create no great career a civilian can excite no great enthusiasm. The persons in civil employment had their prestige limited by the same contrivances that limited their power; the nation was fatigued with talkers, for talking had no result: a general alone could strike its imagination, for a general alone was in the situation to do anything remarkable. Each party saw this. The patriots or democrats, represented in the Directory by Laréveillère and Gohier (who had become a Director instead of Treillard); Barras, of no particular opinion, who might be said to represent those generally who were intriguing for place; and Sieyès, the most capable of the executive, at the head of a moderate section, still for maintaining the Republic and establishing order, though under some new form. Sieyès had with him a majority in the Council of Ancients, a powerful minority in the Council of the Five Hundred, and some of the most eminent and capable men in France, amongst whom was M. de Talleyrand.

He sought then a General like the rest, but the choice was not so easy to make. Hoche was no more; Joubert had just perished; Moreau was irresolute; Massena, though crowned by the victory of Zurich, too much of the mere soldier; Augereau, a Jacobin; Bernadotte, unreliable. At this moment (on the 9th October, 1799), Bonaparte

landed from Egypt. He broke the quarantine laws, he had deserted his army, but the country felt that he was wanted; and through his progress to Paris, as well as on his arrival there, he was hailed by acclamations.

His object at this time, if he had any distinct one, was the Directory, for which, however, he wanted a dispensation as to age. But he found that the majority of the Directory would not hear of this dispensation. Something else was to be tried, and that something else could only be combined with Barras or Sieyès. Now Barras, Bonaparte hated: for Barras had been his protector, without having been his friend. In regard to Sieyès, M. Thiers has said, not untruly, that two superior Frenchmen, until they have had the opportunity of flattering one another, are natural enemies. Moreover, Bonaparte and Sieyès had met at Gohier's without exchanging a syllable, and had separated, disliking each other more than ever. M. de Talleyrand undertook to reconcile these two men, whose rivalry had to be conquered by their interests,—and he succeeded. But, with Sieyès, a total subversion of the existing state of things was a matter of course, because the only ambition he ever fostered was that of inventing institutions, which he did with a rare intelligence as to the combination of ideas, forgetting that societies have something in them besides ideas.

A revolution therefore was decided upon; it was to be brought about by the Ancients, of whom Sieyès was sure, and who were to declare that the chambers were in danger at Paris, and should be assembled at St. Cloud; the safety of these assemblies was then to be confided to the guardianship of Bonaparte; and the dissolution of the Directory by the resignation of a majority of its members was to follow. After this, it was supposed that the majority of the Five Hundred, overawed by a large military force, opposed by the other branch of the Legislature, and having no government to support it, would, in some way or other, be overcome. The first two measures accordingly were taken on the 18th Brumaire, but the third remained. Sieyès and Ducos, who acted together and who resigned, were balanced by Gohier and Moulins, who would not give in their resig-

nation; while Barras had the casting vote; and it was M. de Talleyrand again, who, in conjunction with Admiral Bruix, was charged with the task of coaxing this *once* important man into accepting insignificance and retreat. In this task he succeeded, and the vanquished director, conquered as much, perhaps, by his own indolence, as by his politic friend's arguments, stepped out of the bath, reposing in which his two visitors had found him, into the carriage which bore him from the Luxembourg, and thus the Directory being no longer in existence, a charge of grenadiers in the Orangery of St. Cloud settled the affair on the day following.

XIII.

In glancing over the narrative of these events, we shall see that, if a similar result could have been otherwise arrived at (which is doubtful), it certainly could not have been arrived at in the same peaceful and easy way, but for the assistance of M. de Talleyrand. The legal part of the recent change was effected by Sieyès, whom he had united with Bonaparte; and accomplished through Barras, whose abdication he also procured. The time for rewarding these services was come, and when Napoleon became first consul, M. de Talleyrand was made minister of foreign affairs.

In following him through the period which intervened between the 10th of August, 1792, and the 18th Brumaire, we find him a fugitive to England under doubtful auspices, an exile in America dabbling in politics, projecting commercial adventures, and, above all, waiting on events which proved fortunate to him.

Having quitted France as the partisan of a constitutional monarchy, he returns to it when the feverish passions and opinions which had so long convulsed it were settled down under a republic—too strong to be overturned by Royalists—too weak to promise a long existence.

He takes office under the government which he finds, a government that, compared with its immediate predecessors, offered in a remarkable manner the security of property and life.

He sides, amidst the conflicts which still continue, with those who are for a middle course, between bringing back the Bourbons with all their prejudices, or re-establishing the Robespierreans with all their horrors. In these political struggles he exhibits moderation and resolution: in the department which he fills, he shows tact and capacity. His two memoirs, read before the Institute, are remarkable for the elegance of their style and the comprehensiveness of their views.* Defending himself against the two parties who assailed him—the one for being too much, the other for being too little, of a republican—he uses language which is at once bold, dignified, and moderate, and the only question that can arise is as to whether it was sincere.

Finally, he throws a government—which is at once feeble, profligate, divided, and conscious of its own incapacity,—into the hands of a man of great genius, by whom he expected to be rewarded, and who, upon the whole, seemed the one most capable of steadying the course, promoting the prosperity, and elevating the destiny of his country.

* See *Appendix*.

Part IV.

FIRST CONSULATE.

Talleyrand supports the extension of the First Consul's power, based on a principle of toleration and oblivion of the past.—Napoleon attempts peace with England; fails.—Battle of Marengo.—Treaty of Lunéville and peace of Amiens.—Society at Paris during the peace.—Rupture.—M. de Talleyrand supports Consulate for life, Legion of Honour, and Concordat.—Gets permission from the Pope to wear the secular costume and to administer civil affairs.—Marries.—Execution of Duc d'Enghien.—New coalition.—Battle of Austerlitz.—Treaty of Presburg.—Fox comes into power; attempts a peace unsuccessfully.—Prussia declares against France, and is vanquished at Jena.—Peace of Tilsit.—M. de Talleyrand resigns Ministry of Foreign Affairs.—Differences about policy in Spain.—Talleyrand and Fouché now at the head of a quiet opposition.—Russian campaign; idea of employing M. de Talleyrand.—Napoleon's defeats commence.—Offers M. de Talleyrand the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after the battle of Leipsic, but on unacceptable conditions.—In the continued series of disasters that ensue, Talleyrand always advises peace.—Tries to persuade Marie-Louise not to quit Paris.—Doubtful then between a regency with her and the Bourbons.—When, however, her departure suspends the constituted authority, and the Emperor of Russia takes up his residence at the Hôtel Talleyrand, and asks M. de Talleyrand what government should be established, he says that of the Bourbons.—Efforts to obtain a Constitution with the Restoration.—Napoleon arrives at Fontainebleau.—Negotiates, but finally abandons the French throne, and accepts the island of Elba, under the title of Emperor, as a retreat.

I.

One of M. de Talleyrand's striking phrases (a phrase I have already quoted) was that the great Revolution "*avait désossé la France*"—"had disboned France!" There had ceased, in fact, to be any great principles in that country, holding affairs together, and keeping them in form and order. He said, then, "What principles cannot do, a man must. When society cannot create a government, a government must create society." It was with this idea that he was willing to centre in Napoleon all the power which that wonderful man's commanding genius

required. But he wanted, in return, two things: one, that he should himself profit by the power he aided in establishing; the other, that that power should be exercised, on the whole, for the benefit of the French nation. Relying, for the moment, on the fulfilment of these conditions, he delivered himself up to a dictatorship which should quietly and gradually absorb all the used-up opinions and institutions.

Sieyès, who, with a more profound, had a less sagacious intellect, imagined that after he, a man of letters, had handed over the State to a daring, unscrupulous man of the world, he could govern that man. But M. de Talleyrand rather despised and underrated Sieyès, whom he looked on as a tailor who was always making coats that never fitted—a skilful combiner of theories, but without any tact as to their application; and when some one, *à propos* of the new constitution, which Sieyès had undertaken to frame, said, "Après tout ce Sieyès a un esprit *bien profond*," he replied, "Profond! Hem! Vous voulez dire peut-être *creux*."*

Bonaparte's conduct justified this witticism; for when the first project of the constitution alluded to was presented to him, he treated it with ridicule, in the well-known phrase: "A man must have little honour or intellect who would consent to be a pig, put up in a stye to fatten on so many millions a year."

The hero of the 18th Brumaire was not, in truth, a man who would accept the robes without the reality of power; and having taken out of the plan proposed for his acceptance what suited his views, and discarded the rest, he endowed himself with as much authority as he thought would be tolerated; for though France was wearied with perpetual changes and convulsions, she was not at that time prepared to end them by a new sovereignty.

One of the causes, indeed, which facilitated Napoleon's early steps towards the great object of his ambition, was the general incredulity as to the possibility of his attaining it.

* "After all that Sieyès has a very profound intellect." "Profound! Hem! You mean perhaps—*hollow*."

M. de Talleyrand himself did not, in all probability, imagine that he was making a military empire, when he was aiming at concentrating authority in the hands of the chief of the Republic; but he thought that the first care was to steady a community which had so long lost its balance; and on one occasion, shortly after the formation of the new government, and when the part which the first consul was to play was not yet altogether decided, he is said by a contemporary* to have held, at a private interview with the first consul, the following language:†—

"Citizen consul, you have entrusted to me the ministry of foreign affairs, and I will justify your confidence; but I think I must declare to you that henceforth I will communicate with you alone. This is no vain presumption on my part. I say that, in the interest of France—in order that it may be well governed—in order that there may be unity of action in its conduct—you must be the first consul; and the first consul must have in his hands all the political part of the government; *i.e.*, the ministry of the interior and of the police, for internal affairs; and my ministry for foreign; and also the two great ministries of execution, the war and the marine. It would be proper that these five departments should communicate with you alone. The administrations of justice and finance are, no

* Bourrienne.

† "Quand Roger Ducos et Sieyès portaient le titre de consuls, les trois membres de la commission consulaire étaient égaux, si non de fait, du moins en droit. Cambacérès et Lebrun les ayant remplacés, M. de Talleyrand, appelé dans le même moment à succéder à M. Reinhard au ministère des relations extérieures, fut reçu en audience particulière dans le cabinet du premier consul.

"'Citoyen Consul,' lui dit-il, 'vous m'avez confié le ministère des relations extérieures, et je justifierai votre confiance; mais je dois vous déclarer dès à présent que je ne veux travailler qu'avec vous. Il n'y a point là de vaine fierté de ma part; je vous parle seulement dans l'intérêt de la France. Pour qu'elle soit bien gouvernée, pour qu'il y ait unité d'action, il faut que vous soyez le premier consul, et que le premier consul ait dans sa main tout ce qui tient directement à la politique, c'est-à-dire les ministères de l'intérieur et de la police, pour les affaires du dehors; ensuite les deux grands moyens d'exécution, la guerre et la marine. Il serait donc de toute convenance que les ministres de ces cinq départements travaillassent avec vous seul. L'administration de la justice et le bon ordre dans les finances tien-

doubt, connected with the policy of the State by many ties, but these ties are less inseparable from that policy than the departments I have mentioned. If you will allow me to say so, then, general, I would add that it would be convenient to give to the second consul, a very clever jurisconsult, the department of justice; and to the third consul, also very able as a financier, the direction of the finances. These matters will occupy and amuse them. And you, general, having at your disposal all the mainsprings of government, will be able to give it that fitting direction for arriving at the noble aim which you have in view—the regeneration of France."

II.

The minister of foreign affairs, in advising a willing listener thus to take possession of all important affairs, merely echoed, it must be allowed, a general sentiment; for all the different parties then in presence saw the new dictator through glasses coloured by their own particular illusions. The Royalists imagined that General Bonaparte would turn out a General Monk; the moderate Republicans, a General Washington! M. de Talleyrand knew that Bonaparte was neither a Monk nor a Washington; and that he would neither hand over the power he had acquired to the exiled dynasty, nor lay it down at the feet of the French people. He was aware, on the contrary, that he would keep it as long as he could keep it; and he wished him to keep it with a system which should

nent sans doute à la politique par une foule de liens: mais ces lieus sont moins sacrés. Si vous me permettez de le dire, général, j'ajouterai qu'il conviendrait de donner au deuxième consul, très-habile jurisconsulte, la haute main sur la justice, et au troisième consul, également bien versé dans la connaissance des lois financières, la haute main sur les finances. Cela les occupera, les amusera; et vous, général, ayant à votre disposition les parties vitales du gouvernement, vous arriverez au noble but que vous vous proposez—le régénération de la France.'"

"Qui ne reconnaît là le premier germe de l'archichancellerie et de l'architrésorerie de l'empire?" (Bourrienne, *Mémoires*, vol. iii., pp. 324, 325.

have at its head the men of the Revolution, without excluding men of the ancient *régime* who would accept the principles that the Revolution had founded. This was precisely, at that moment, the view of Napoleon himself; and the appointment of Fouché, a regicide, as minister of police, and the permission for the Royalist *émigrés* and the proscribed priests to return to France, gave the exact expression of the policy that was thenceforth to be pursued.

But none knew better than the first consul that it was necessary, having gained power by war, to show that he wished to consolidate it by peace. He addressed, therefore, his famous letter to George III.,* on the effect of which he counted little, and his minister of foreign affairs less. But it was always something in the eyes of his nation to have evinced his own inclination for an interval of repose, and to have placed himself on a level with kings when he spoke to them as the popular chief of the French people.

The refusal of England to treat was the signal of a new coalition, and the renewal of a general war; at the commencement of which Bonaparte, by a stroke of genius, defeated the Austrians in Italy when they were marching as they conceived without opposition into France.

But although the hopes of the cabinet of Vienna were struck down at the battle of Marengo, it did not yet submit to despair, even when the Emperor Paul, flattered by the attentions of the first consul (who had returned him his prisoners newly clothed), had withdrawn from the coalition. The policy of France, under these circumstances, was to create divisions amongst the remaining allies (Austria and England) by opening negotiations with each. This was tried by M. de Talleyrand with the cabinet of Vienna, through the means of the Comte St. Julien, who (sent to settle some particulars relative to the convention which took place after the Italian war) actually signed a treaty which his government disowned; and with that of St. James, through the means of an agent employed in the exchange of prisoners, but whose attempts as a negotiator also failed. The success of Moreau, in

* See *Napoleon's Letter to King George III. before Marengo.*

Germany, however, at last obtained the treaty of Lunéville; and shortly afterwards M. Otto concluded in London the preliminaries of a similar treaty, which was received with equal joy by the French and English nations.

The skill with which these affairs were conducted was generally acknowledged; but M. de Talleyrand had nevertheless to undergo the mortification of seeing Joseph Bonaparte named the negotiator with Lord Cornwallis instead of himself. He accepted, however, this arrangement with a good grace, for he had this great advantage over most men,—his vanity submitted itself easily to his interest or his ambition; and seeing the impolicy of a rivalry with the first consul's eldest brother, he saw also that, having already obtained the signature of the preliminaries of a treaty, he should have with the public all the merits of that treaty if it took place, and Joseph Bonaparte all the blame, if any failure in the further negotiations occurred.

In the meantime, the seas were opened at once to France, and the English government, having made this immediate concession, was almost bound to give way in any subsequent discussions; for to have yielded what France most desired in order to obtain peace, and then not to have obtained it, would have been ridiculous. Thus, a definitive treaty was shortly afterwards signed at Amiens, and Paris reopened its gates to the excited curiosity of the English traveller.

III.

During this period M. de Talleyrand's house became necessarily one of the great resorts of foreign visitors. He lived in the Hôtel Galifet, then the official residence of the minister of foreign affairs, a large hotel in the Rue St. Dominique (Faubourg St. Germain), which had been built by a rich colonist of St. Domingo, who gave no other order to his architect than to erect an hotel with ninety-nine columns—a monument of the skill of the builder, and of the singularity of the proprietor—which yet remains.

The principal *habitués* of the ministry were M. de Montrond, Duc de Laval, M. de Saint-Foix, General Duroc, Colonel Beauharnais, afterwards Prince Eugène, Fox, Erskine, &c., &c.

Some few yet remember the easy nonchalance with which, reclining on his sofa by the side of the fire, the minister of foreign affairs welcomed those whom he wished to make at home, the extreme and formal civility which marked his reception of his colleagues and the senators with whom he was not intimate, and the careless and pleasing familiarity that he used towards the favourite officers of the first consul, and the ladies and diplomatists to whom he was partial.

The enmity which for the last few years had been so violent between the French and English people was beginning to subside amidst their intercourse; but, unhappily for them and for the world, the peace, or rather truce, which they had concluded could only be maintained by acknowledging a galling inferiority to the French ruler, who, it was evident, regarded our retirement from the contest we had long waged without dishonour as a means for relieving St. Domingo, confirming his dominion over Italy, and invading Switzerland, circumstances which rendered it justifiable for England to retain Malta, even though she had foolishly and inconsiderately engaged to resign it.

I need hardly observe that the conduct of Napoleon throughout the whole of this affair was overbearing; but that of his minister of foreign affairs was the reverse; and I should add that that minister had the credit of having obtained, just as Lord Whitworth was departing, the first consul's permission to propose an arrangement which would have left us Malta for such a compensation as, under all the circumstances, might perhaps have been accepted. But this compromise being haughtily rejected, war somewhat abruptly recommenced.

The respite, however, thus secured, had served Napoleon's purposes, and enabled him, by the popularity it brought, to lay the first stones of the Empire,—in the Legion of Honour, out of which grew the nobility of the Empire;—in the consulship for life, which was a step towards the hereditary rank he soon assumed; and in the Concordat, which preluded his coronation by the Pope.

It is not to be presumed that these great innovations

on the principles which had so long been dominant took place without a struggle. All the ardent republicans combated them as a matter of course, designating the tyrant who proposed them as a second Cæsar, who evoked the patriotism of a second Brutus. But a more serious party also attacked them in the legislative bodies, nor was it without an illegal act of authority that this party was vanquished.

The measures in question were not in fact popular, and the Concordat at one time seemed not unlikely to provoke an insurrection in the army.

M. de Talleyrand, nevertheless, supported these measures warmly; and, with the aid of Cambacérès, softened and conciliated many of their opponents.

"We have," he constantly repeated, "to consolidate a government and reorganize a society. Governments are only consolidated by a continued policy, and it is not only necessary that this policy should be continued,—people should have the conviction that it will be so.

"I look upon the consulship for life as the only means of inspiring this conviction."

So again, he said, with respect to the Legion of Honour and the Concordat, "In reorganizing any human society, you must give it those elements which you find in every human society.

"Where did you ever see one flourish without honours or religion? The present age has created a great many new things, but it has not created a new mankind; and if you mean to legislate practically for men, you must treat men as what they always have been and always are."

For the Concordat he had a peculiar reason to plead; no one gained so much by it: for he now legitimately entered into civil life on the authority of his spiritual master, and by a brief which I here cite:—

"*To our very dear son, Charles Maurice Talleyrand.**

"We were touched with joy at learning your ardent

* "*A notre Très-cher Fils, Charles Maurice Talleyrand.*

"Nous avons été touché de joie quand nous avons appris l'ardent désir que vous avez de vous réconcilier avec nous et avec l'Eglise

desire to be reconciled with us and the Catholic Church: loosening then on your account the bowels of our fatherly charity, we discharge you by the plenitude of our power from the effect of all excommunications. We impose on you, as the consequence of your reconciliation with us and the Church, the distribution of alms, more especially for the poor of the church of Autun, which you formerly governed: we grant you, moreover, the liberty to wear the secular costume and to administer all civil affairs, whether in the office you now fill, or in others to which your government may call you."

This brief was taken by M. de Talleyrand as a permission to become a layman, and even to take a wife. The lady he married, born in the East Indies, divorced from a M. Grand, and mentioned, in connection with a scandalous story, in the life of Sir Philip Francis, was as remarkable for being a beauty as for not being a wit. Every one has heard the story (whether true or invented) of her asking Sir George Robinson after his man "Friday." But M. de Talleyrand vindicated his choice, saying, "A clever wife often compromises her husband; a stupid one only compromises herself."

IV.

It was shortly after the renewal of hostilities that the event occurred which has given rise to the most controversy concerning Napoleon, and to the bitterest attacks upon M. de Talleyrand. I speak of the execution of the Duc d'Enghien. Many details attending this transaction are still in dispute; but the broad outline of it is as follows:—

The pure Republicans (as they were then called) had,

catholique. Dilatant donc à votre égard les entrailles de notre charité paternelle, nous vous dégageons par la plénitude de notre puissance du lieu de toutes les excommunications. Nous vous imposons par suite de votre reconciliation avec nous et avec l'Eglise, des distributions d'aumônes pour le soulagement surtout des pauvres de l'église d'Autun que vous avez gouvernée. Nous vous accordons le pouvoir de porter l'habit séculier, et de gérer toutes les affaires civiles, soit qu'il vous plaise de demeurer dans la charge que vous exercez maintenant, soit que vous passiez à d'autres auxquelles votre gouvernement pourrait vous appeler."

on the one hand, at this period become desperate; on the other hand, the latitude that had for a time been allowed to the Royalists, had given that party courage. The renewal of an European war increased this courage. The power and prestige of the marvellous person at the head of the consular government had made both parties consider that nothing was possible to them as long as he lived.

A variety of attempts had consequently been made against his life. The popular belief—that of Bonaparte himself—was that these attempts proceeded mainly from the *émigrés*, aided by the money of England, a belief which the foolish correspondence of the British minister at Munich, Mr. Drake, with a pretended *émigré*—in fact, however, an agent of the French government (Mahée),—might unfortunately have encouraged.

George Cadoudal, the daring leader of the Chouans, who had already been implicated in plots of this kind, was known to be in Paris and engaged in some new enterprise, with which Pichegru, certainly—Moreau, apparently—was connected. But in the reports of the police it was also stated that the conspirators awaited the arrival at Paris of a prince of the house of Bourbon.

The Duc d'Enghien, then residing at Ettenheim, in the Duchy of Baden, seemed the most likely of the Bourbon princes to be the one alluded to: and spies were sent to watch his movements.

The reports of such agents are rarely correct in the really important particulars. But they were particularly unfortunate in this instance, for they mistook, owing to the German pronunciation, a Marquis de Thumery, staying with the Bourbon Prince, for Dumouriez: and the presence of that general on the Rhenan frontier, and with a Condé, strongly corroborated all other suspicions.

A council was summoned, composed of the three consuls,—Bonaparte, Cambacérès, Lebrun,—the minister of justice and police, Régnier,—and Talleyrand, minister of foreign affairs.*

At this council (10th March 1804) it was discussed whether it would not be advisable to seize the Duc

* Fouché, not then in office, was also consulted.

d'Enghien, though out of France, and bring him to Paris; and the result was the immediate expedition of a small force, under Colonel Caulaincourt, which seized the prince on the Baden territory (15th March); M. de Talleyrand, in a letter to the Grand Duke, explaining and justifying the outrage. Having been kept two days at Strasburg, the royal victim was sent from that city, on the 18th, in a post chariot, arrived on the 20th at the gates of Paris at eleven in the morning; was kept there till four in the afternoon; was then conducted by the boulevards to Vincennes, which he reached at nine o'clock in the evening; and was shot at six o'clock on the following morning, having been condemned by a military commission—composed of a general of brigade (General Hullin), six colonels, and two captains—according to a decree of the governor of Paris (Murat) of that day (20th March), which decree (dictated by Napoleon) ordered the unfortunate captive to be tried on the charge of having borne arms against the Republic: of having been and being in the pay of England, and of having been engaged in plots, conducted by the English in and out of France, against the French government. The concluding order was, that, if found guilty, he should be at once executed.

The whole of this proceeding is atrocious. A prince of the dethroned family is arrested in a neutral state, without a shadow of legality;* he is brought to Paris and tried for his life on accusations which, considering his birth and position, no generous enemy could have considered crimes; he is found guilty without a witness being called, without a proof of the charges against him being adduced, and without a person to defend him being allowed.†

* It is even remarked, that a few days previous, the Due Dalberg had been informed that there was no jealousy of the *émigrés* at that place.—See *M. de Rovigo*, vol. ii., and *Letter of the Duc Dalberg to M. de Talleyrand*, 13th November, 1823.

† There were two "*procès-verbaux*," or accounts taken of this trial. The one published in the *Moniteur*, which cites the laws in virtue of which the prince was condemned, and the pieces that were brought forward in proof of the accusation. This is evidently an afterthought: there was not time to write it at the spot and on the

This trial takes place at midnight, in a dungeon; and the prisoner is shot, before the break of day, in a ditch!

It is natural enough that all persons connected with such a transaction should have endeavoured to escape from its ignominy. General Hullin has charged Savary (afterwards Duc de Rovigo), who, as commander of the gendarmerie, was present at the execution, with having hurried the trial, and prevented an appeal to Napoleon, which the condemned prince demanded. The Duc de Rovigo denies with much plausibility these particulars, and indeed, all concern in the affair beyond his mere presence, and the strict fulfilment of the orders he had received; and accuses M. de Talleyrand—against whom it must be observed he had on other accounts a special grudge—of having led to the prince's seizure by a report read at the Council on the 10th March; of having intercepted a letter written to the first consul by the illustrious captive at Strasburg, and of having hastened and provoked the execution, of which he offers no other proof than that he met Talleyrand, at five o'clock, coming out of Murat's, who was then, as I have said, governor of Paris, and who had just given orders for the formation of the military commission. It must be observed also, that, for the report of what passed in the council, M. de Rovigo only quotes a conversation which he had some years afterwards with Cambacérès, who was anxious to prove that he himself had opposed the violation of the German territory.

As to the supposed letter written by the Duc d'Enghien, the persons about the Duc declared that he never wrote a letter at Strasburg; and in the prince's diary, which speaks of a letter to the Princesse de Rohan, there is no mention of a letter to the first consul. With respect to another letter, written, the Duc de Rovigo seems to suppose, by M. Massias, French minister at Baden, there is no

scene. The other cites nothing but the decree of the 29th Ventôse, and the answers of the prince, after a deliberation on which he is ordered to immediate execution; this is genuine. The laws by which he is condemned are left in blank.

trace of it in the French archives; whilst the mere fact of M. de Talleyrand having been at Murat's proves nothing (if it be true that he was there) beyond the visit. Indeed, as Murat himself blamed the execution, and did what he could to avert it (see Thiers' *Consulate and Empire*, vol. v. p. 4), there is some probability that, if M. de Talleyrand sought Murat, it was with a view of seeing what could be done to save the prince, and not with the view of destroying him. On the other hand, Bourrienne, who had opportunities of knowing the truth, asserts that M. de Talleyrand, so far from favouring this murder, warned the Duc d'Enghien, through the Princesse de Rohan, of the danger in which he stood.

The Duc Dalberg, minister of Baden at Paris in 1804, also speaks of M. de Talleyrand as opposed to all that was done in this affair.*

Louis XVIII., to whom M. de Talleyrand wrote when the Duc de Rovigo's statement appeared, ordered that personage to appear no more at his court. Fouché declared the act to be entirely that of the first consul; and lastly, Napoleon himself always maintained that the act was his own, and justified it.

For myself, after weighing all the evidence that has come before me (none of it, I must admit, quite conclusive), my persuasion is that the first consul had determined either to put the prince in his power to death, or to humiliate him by a pardon granted at his request; and it seems to me not improbable that he hesitated, though rather disposed, perhaps, to punish than to spare, till all was over.

For this supposition there is the declaration of his brother Joseph, who says that a pardon had been promised to Josephine; of Madame de Rémusat, who, playing at chess that evening with Napoleon, states that he was muttering all the night to himself lines from the great

* "Bonaparte seul, mal informé par ce que la police avait de plus vil, et n'écoutant que sa fureur, se porta à cet excès sans consulter. Il fit enlever le prince avec l'intention de le tuer. Il est connu que sous votre ministère vous n'avez cessé de modérer les passions de Bonaparte."—*Letter of Duc Dalberg*, May 13, 1823.

French poets in favour of clemency; and, lastly, there is an order given to M. Real, minister of police, who was charged to see the Duc d'Enghien, and to report to Bonaparte the result of the interview, which evidently implied that no execution was intended till the minister's report had reached the terrible disposer of life or death, who might then finally take his resolve.

But the opportunity of coming to a decision, after receiving the report of the minister of police, never occurred. By one of those unforeseen accidents which sometimes frustrate intentions, M. Real, to whose house the written instructions I have been speaking of were carried by Savary himself, had gone to bed with the injunction not to be disturbed, and did not wake till the prince was no more:—so that Napoleon had not the chance of clemency, which he undoubtedly expected, presented to him. At all events, whatever may have been the intentions of this extraordinary man, whose policy was generally guided by calculations in which human life was considered of small importance, I believe, as far as regards the person I am principally occupied with: first, that M. de Talleyrand did read at the Council on the 10th of March a memoir containing the information that had reached his office, and which he was naturally obliged to report; secondly, that when M. de Cambacérès spoke against the original arrest, M. de Talleyrand remained silent, which may be accounted for either by a wish not to compromise himself, or, as persons well acquainted with Napoleon have assured me, by a knowledge that this was the best way to give efficacy to M. de Cambacérès' arguments; thirdly, that when M. de Talleyrand wrote to the Grand Duke of Baden, excusing the intended violation of his territory, he did endeavour to convey such a warning to the Duc d'Enghien as would prevent his being captured; finally, that when the Duc was brought up to Vincennes he gave no advice (which he thought would be useless) to Bonaparte, but approved of the efforts made by Josephine and Joseph, who were the best mediators in the prince's behalf, and that, being also aware of the instructions sent to M. Real, he did not think the execution probable.

As to taking an active part in this tragedy, such conduct would not be in harmony with his character; nor have the accusations, to which his position not unnaturally exposed him, been supported by any trustworthy testimony. To have lent himself, however, even in appearance, to so dark a deed, and to have remained an instrument in Napoleon's hands after its committal, evinces a far stronger sense of the benefits attached to office, than of the obloquy attached to injustice.

This, it is said, he did not deny; and, when a friend advised him to resign, is reported to have replied: "If Bonaparte has been guilty, as you say, of a crime, that is no reason why I should be guilty of a folly."

The execution of the Duc d'Enghien took place during the night of the 20th March. On the 7th of April, Pichegru, who had been arrested, was found strangled in his room, as some thought, by the police—as the government declared, by his own hands: George Cadoudal, who had also been captured, suffered on the scaffold; and Moreau, after being brought before a tribunal which condemned him to two years' imprisonment, had this absurd sentence commuted into exile. Bonaparte having thus struck terror into the partisans of the ancient dynasty, and having rid himself of his most powerful military rival, placed on his head, amidst the servile approbation of the Legislature and the apparent acquiescence of the nation, a crown which was solemnly consecrated by Pius VII. (2nd December, 1804).

V.

The assumption of the imperial title was an epoch in the struggle which had for some time been going on between the two statesmen who contributed the most, first, to raise the power of Napoleon, and finally to overthrow it. Talleyrand and Fouché are these two statesmen; and they may be taken as the representatives of the classes whose adhesion marked Bonaparte's force, and whose defection marked his decline. The one, a great nobleman, an enlightened member of the Constituent Assembly, a liberal, such as the fashion, the theories, and the abuses of the old *régime* had created him. The other

a plebeian and conventionalist of the mountain, a democrat and regicide by circumstances, position, and the fury of the time. From the 18th Brumaire they both attached themselves to the first consul's fortunes. Cool, unprejudiced, without hatred, without partialities, each, notwithstanding, had the feelings of his *caste;* and, in moderating the passion and influencing the views of Napoleon, the one never forgot that he was born in the aristocracy, the other that he was the offspring of the people.

Fouché, then, was for employing the republican forms, and entrusting authority exclusively to what may be called new men. Talleyrand was rather for returning to the fashions of a monarchy, ridiculed, to use his own expression, the "*parvenus*" who had never walked on a "parquet,"* and endeavoured to introduce into the employment of the State the aspirants whose principles were liberal, but whose names were ancient and historical.

The Empire which was the natural consequence of the tendency which Talleyrand had favoured and Fouché opposed, nevertheless united and wanted these two politicians; for while it sanctioned the advantages and titles of the old nobility, it established on a firm and equal basis a new nobility, and brought both to a central point, under the rule of a man of genius.

Fouché, once the Empire decided upon, renounced all further attempts to limit Napoleon's will, and only sought to regain his favour.

Talleyrand, conceiving that all the hopes of the enlightened men of his youth who had sought to obtain a constitutional monarchy were at that moment visionary, abandoned them for a new order of things, which, while it pressed upon the energy and intellect of the individual Frenchman, gave a concentrated expression to the energy and intellect of the French nation, and made it ready to accept a glorious tyranny without enthusiasm, but without dissatisfaction. Nor was the French nation wholly wrong.

* The houses of the upper classes had oaken floors, called *parquets:* the houses of the lower classes had brick floors.

A great deluge had swept just recently over all that previous centuries had established; society was still on a narrow and shaking plank which required widening, strengthening, but, above all, fixing over the still turbulent and agitated waters. Everything of ancient manners, of those habits of thought, without which no community of men can march long or steadily together, was gone. No received notions on essential subjects anywhere existed; and a nation which has no such notions cannot have that sort of public morality which is, to the position and respectability of a state, what private morality is to the respectability and position of an individual. The first essential to a community is order, for under order received notions establish themselves. Order combined with liberty is the highest degree of order. But order without liberty is preferable to disorder and license. Now, Napoleon's internal government, with all its faults, was the personification of order, as that of the convention had been of disorder; and what was the consequence? a spirit of freedom grew up amidst the despotism of the latter, as a submission to tyranny had been engendered under the wild violence of the former. The phrase, that Bonaparte "*refaisait le lit des Bourbons*,"* was a criticism on his own policy, but it might be an eulogium on that of his followers.

VI.

In the meantime a change of forms and titles at Paris was the sign of a similar change throughout Europe. Republics became kingdoms: the Emperor's family, sovereigns: his marshals and favourites, princes and grand dignitaries of the Empire. Those who had shared the conqueror's fortunes had a share allotted to them in his conquests, and for a moment the theory of the nineteenth century brought back the realities of the middle ages. Yet, and notwithstanding these signs and tokens of ambition, had it not been for the rupture with England and the cruel deed at Vincennes, Napoleon's new dignity, that gave a splendid decoration to his new power and an

* "Was re-making the bed of the Bourbons."

apparent close to his adventurous career, would probably have induced the continent, without absolutely prostrating itself at his feet, to have acknowledged and submitted to his superiority. But the fortitude with which England had braved his menaces, and the act which had sullied his renown, produced a new coalition, and led to a treaty between England and Russia and Austria, the one signed on 11th of April, and the other the 9th of August, 1805. So formidable a combination served to disturb Bonaparte from the project of an invasion, with which he was then threatening our shores. But his star, though somewhat clouded, was still in the ascendant. The battle of Austerlitz sanctioned the title of Imperator, as the battle of Marengo had done that of Consul.

M. Mignet has given us a curious instance, extracted from the French archives, of the comprehensive views of the minister of foreign affairs at this period.* Immediately after the victory of Ulm, M. de Talleyrand wrote to Napoleon in something like these terms:

"While your Majesty is gaining the victories which will lead to a glorious peace, I am considering how that peace can best be established. There are four great States in Europe—France, Russia, England, and Austria. England and France, from their juxtaposition, their spirit, and consequent rivality, may be considered natural enemies; that is to say, no great war will take place in Europe without these powers coming into collision. In such case, Russia cannot cordially be with France as long as she retains her projects over the Ottoman empire, which it would be madness in us to encourage. Austria, on the other hand, is sure to side with England as long as her frontiers join ours, and her natural objects of ambition are the same. A great policy, therefore, would be to deprive Russia of her Turkish dreams, and Austria of the possessions neighbouring to those states which we protect, and which, in fact, are ours. I would take from Austria, then, Suabia, in Southern Germany, the Tyrol, adjoining Switzerland; and I would make Venice an

* See *Mémoires sur Talleyrand*, read in the Academy by M. Mignet, May 11, 1839.

independent Republic, and thus a barrier to both parties in Italy. To this plan, however, Austria herself must consent with satisfaction, or it cannot be permanent; and I would obtain that consent by giving her, in exchange for what we take, Wallachia, Moldavia, Bessarabia, and the northern portion of Bulgaria. By this plan, your Majesty will remark, the Germans are for ever shut out of Italy, Austria made the rival of Russia and guardian of the Ottoman empire, and the Russians excluded from Europe, and thus directed upon the kingdoms of Central Asia, where they will naturally come into conflict with the rulers of Hindostan."

"This project," says M. Mignet, "being conceived at a time when nothing was impossible, might, after the battle of Austerlitz, have been accomplished, and would doubtless have given another destiny to Europe, and established the grandeur of France on solid foundations."

Napoleon, however, was not inclined to adopt so great a plan on the suggestion of another; nor, indeed, is it impossible but that the secret instinct of his peculiar genius, which was for war, opposed itself to a permanent system of tranquillity. He advanced, then, in the false policy which ultimately proved his ruin; neither gaining the affection nor utterly destroying the power of the vanquished: and the cabinet of Vienna, subdued in Italy, humbled, by the confederation of the Rhine and the elevation of the secondary states, in Germany, but with its power not annihilated, and its good-will not conciliated, signed the treaty of Presburg. This treaty, which severed the relations between the Russian and Austrian empires, and a change which now took place in the British councils, afforded another chance of giving to the new empire a peaceful and durable existence.

VII.

Mr. Fox had succeeded to Mr. Pitt, and Mr. Fox was an advocate of peace and an admirer of the warrior who guided the destinies of France. He was also a personal friend of M. de Talleyrand. The Emperor Alexander shared in some degree Mr. Fox's admiration. The hopes

which he had founded on an alliance with Austria were now, moreover, at an end, and no one at that time relied on the shuffling, grasping, and timid policy of Prussia. Both the Russian and English cabinets were willing then to treat. M. d'Oubril was sent to Paris by the cabinet of St. Petersburg, and negotiations begun through Lord Yarmouth, the late Marquis of Hertford (then a "*détenu*"*), between the cabinets of St. James and the Tuileries.

M. de Talleyrand, in these double negotiations, succeeded in getting the Russian negotiator to sign a separate treaty, which, however, the Russian government disavowed; and acquired such an influence over Lord Yarmouth, that the English government deemed it necessary to replace him by Lord Lauderdale, who was empowered to negotiate for the two allied governments. It is but just to observe that M. de Talleyrand, though thwarted by a variety of intrigues, laboured with the utmost assiduity in favour of a peaceful termination of this negotiation; for he already saw, and at this time almost alone saw, that without peace all was yet a problem, and that, to use the words of a contemporary, "a succession of battles was a series of figures, of which the first might be 'A,' and the last 'zero.'"†

The position of Malta and Sicily, both at this time in our hands, the natural reluctance that we felt at resigning them without solid guarantees for European tranquillity; and the impossibility of getting such guarantees from the pride and ambition of an aspirant to universal empire, were nevertheless difficulties too great for diplomacy to overcome; and when Prussia, which had lost the golden opportunity of fighting France with Austria by her side, had become so involved by secret engagements with Russia and by public engagements with France—and so restless in the dishonourable and dangerous position in which she found herself, as to be determined on the desperate experiment of escaping from her diplomacy by her arms, another great European struggle commenced.

* The term applied to persons detained in France at the rupture of the peace of Amiens.

† *Mémoires de Rovigo.*

Throughout the new campaigns to which this new coalition led—campaigns beginning with the victory of Jena and closing with the peace of Tilsit—M. de Talleyrand accompanied his imperial master; and though he could hardly be said to exercise a predominant influence over those events, which a more violent character and a more military genius decided, his calmness and good sense (qualities rarely, if ever, abdicated by him) produced a moderating effect upon the imperious warrior, that tended generally to consolidate his successes. The sort of cool way in which he brought to ground many of this extraordinary man's flights, testing them by their practical results, is well enough displayed in a reply which he made to Savary, who, after the battle of Friedland, said, "If peace is not signed in a fortnight, Napoleon will cross the Niemen."

"Et à quoi bon," replied M. de Talleyrand, "passer le Niemen ?"* "Why pass the Niemen ?"

The Niemen, then, partly owing to M. de Talleyrand's counsels, was for this once not passed; and, at last, France, pretending to sacrifice Turkey, and Russia abandoning England, the two combatants signed a treaty, which anticipated that the domination of Europe was for the future to be shared between them.

VIII.

At this period M. de Talleyrand, who had been more struck in the recent war by the temerity than by the triumph of the conqueror, thought that Napoleon's military and his own diplomatic career should cease. Fortune, indeed, had carried both the one and the other to the highest point, which, according to their separate characters and the circumstances of the times, they were likely to attain. To Napoleon's marvellous successes seemed now to belong a supernatural prestige, which the slightest misfortune was capable of destroying, and which a new victory could hardly augment. So also the reputation of M. de Talleyrand was at its height, and many were disposed to consider him as great a master in the science of politics as

* *Mémoires de Rovigo*, vol. iii. p. 116.

his sovereign was in that of war. He had acquired, moreover, immense wealth, as it is said, by extorted gifts from the Powers with which he had been treating, and more especially from the small princes of Germany, whom in the general division of their territory he could either save or destroy, and also by successful speculations on the stock exchange:*—means of acquiring riches highly discreditable to his character, but thought lightly of in a country that teaches the philosophy of indulgence, and had recently seen wealth so rudely scrambled for, that the "*Res si possis recte*" had become as much a French as ever it was a Roman proverb. His health, moreover, was broken, and unequal to the constant attendance on the Emperor's person, which had become almost inseparable from his office; while the elevation of Berthier to the rank of vice-constable established a precedency exceedingly galling to his pride. Under these circumstances, he solicited and obtained permission to retire, and already Prince de Benevent received the title of "vice-grand electeur," raising him to the rank of one of the great dignitaries of the Empire; a position which it appears—so small are even the greatest of us—he desired.

This change in his situation, however, was by no means as yet what it has sometimes been represented—a "disgrace." He still retained great influence in the Emperor's councils, was consulted on all matters relative to foreign affairs, and even appointed with M. de Champagny, his successor, to conduct the negotiations with the court of Spain, which, owing to the invasion of Portugal and the quarrels which had already broken out in the family of Charles IV., were beginning to assume a peculiar character.†

It has been said, indeed, on the one side, that M. de Talleyrand was opposed to any interference with Spain;

* With regard to his habits in this respect, it may not be amiss to refer to the American correspondence: *State Papers and Public Documents of the United States*, vol. iii. pp. 473—479.

† A note written by M. Izquierdo, Spanish ambassador to the Court of France, and dated 24th of March, 1808, is exceedingly curious respecting these particulars.

and, on the other, that it was actually he who first counselled Bonaparte's proceedings in that country. It is probable that he did so far compromise himself in this matter as to advise an arrangement which would have given the territory north of the Ebro to France, and yielded Portugal as a compensation to the Spanish monarch. It is not impossible, moreover, that he knew as early as 1805—for Joseph Bonaparte was then told to learn the Spanish language—that Napoleon had vague dreams of replacing the Bourbon by the Bonaparte dynasty in the Peninsula. But when the French armies, without notice, took possession of Burgos and Barcelona; when an insurrection deposed Charles IV., and the Emperor was about to adopt the policy, not of peaceably aggrandizing France and strengthening Spain against Great Britain, but of kidnapping the Spanish princes and obtaining by a sort of trick the Spanish crown, he was resolutely and bitterly opposed to it, saying: "*On s'empare des couronnes, mais on ne les escamote pas*" ("one takes a crown from a sovereign's head, but one does not pick his pocket of it"). "Besides, Spain is a farm which it is better to allow another to cultivate for you, than to cultivate yourself."

Comte de Beugnot, in his memoirs recently published, speaks thus of these transactions:

* "The Prince de Benevent was acquainted, in all its details, with what had passed (at Bayonne). He appeared indignant. 'Victories,' he said, 'do not suffice to efface such things as these, because there is something in them which it is impossible to describe, that is vile, deceitful, cheating! I cannot tell what will happen, but you will see that no one will pardon him (the Emperor) for this.' The Duc Decrès, indeed," M. de Beugnot continues, "has told me more than once that the Emperor had in his presence reproached M. de Talleyrand for having counselled what

* "Le prince était instruit dans le plus grand détail de ce qui s'était passé à Bayonne, et il m'en parut indigné: 'Les victoires,' me disait-il, 'ne suffisent pas pour effacer de pareils traits, parce qu'il y a là je ne sais quoi de vil; de la tromperie, de la tricherie! Je ne peux pas dire ce qui en arrivera, mais vous verrez que cela ne lui sera pardonné par personne.' Le duc Decrès m'a plus d'une fois assuré que l'Empereur avait reproché en sa présence à M. de Talley-

took place at Bayonne, without M. de Talleyrand seeking to excuse himself. This has always astonished me. It is sufficient to have known M. de Talleyrand to be sure that, if he had been favourable to dispossessing the princes of the House of Bourbon of the Spanish throne, he would not have resorted to the means that were employed. Besides, when he spoke to me, it was with a sort of passion that he never displayed but on subjects which strongly excited him."

There can be no doubt, indeed, that what took place as to Spain was a subject of great difference between M. de Talleyrand and Napoleon. M. de Talleyrand would never afterwards during the reign of Louis XVIII. have publicly affirmed this, surrounded as he was by contemporaries and enemies, if it had not been true. Moreover, the general voice of the time, which is more in such cases to be trusted than any individual testimony, loudly proclaimed it; and as to not answering Napoleon when he was pouring forth in violent and insulting language the accusations which he sometimes levelled at those who displeased him, it is well known that M. de Talleyrand never replied to such attacks but by an impassible face and a dignified silence.

IX.

Nor were the affairs of the Peninsula the only ones on which M. de Talleyrand and the Emperor at this time disagreed. The French troops entered Rome and Spain (for Napoleon was now for despoiling the Pope as a prince, after courting him as a Pontiff) about the same epoch; and the Prince of Benevent was as opposed to one violence as to the other.

It was not, however, out of this affair, or that affair in particular, that the enmity between the emperor and his

rand de lui avoir conseillé tout ce qui s'était fait à Bayonne, sans que celui-ci eût cherché à s'en défendre. Cela m'a toujours étonné. D'abord, il suffit de connaître un peu M. de Talleyrand pour être bien sûr que, si au fond il a été d'avis de déposséder du trône d'Espagne les princes de la maison de Bourbon, il n'a certainement pas indiqué les moyens qu'on a employés. Ensuite, lorsqu'il m'en a parlé, c'était avec une sorte de colère qu'il n'éprouve qu'en présence des événements qui le remuent fortement."

former minister—an enmity so important in the history of both—took its rise.

M. de Talleyrand, the Empire once established and fortunate, had attached himself to it with a sort of enthusiasm. The poesy of victory, and the eloquence of an exalted imagination, subdued for a time the usual nonchalance and moderation of his character. He entered into all Napoleon's plans for reconstituting "An Empire of the Francs," and reviving the system of fiefs and feudal dignitaries; by which it is, however, true, that the followers and favourites of the conqueror had nothing to lose. "Any other system," he said, "but a military one, is in our circumstances at present impossible. I am, then, for making that system splendid, and compensating France for her liberty by her grandeur."

The principality he enjoyed, though it by no means satisfied him, was a link between him and the policy under which he held it. He wished to keep it, and to safeguard the prosperity of a man, whose adversity would cause him to lose it. But he had a strong instinct for the practical; all governments, according to his theory, might be made good, except an impossible one. A government depending on constant success in difficult undertakings, at home and abroad, was, according to his notions, impossible. This idea, after the Peace of Tilsit, more or less haunted him. It made him, in spite of himself, bitter against his chief—bitter at first, more because he liked him than because he disliked him. He would still have aided to save the Empire, but he was irritated because he thought he saw the Empire drifting into a system which would not admit of its being saved. A sentiment of this kind, however, is as little likely to be pardoned by one who is accustomed to consider that his will must be law, as a sentiment of a more hostile nature.

Napoleon began little by little to hate the man for whom he had felt at one time a predilection, and if he disliked any one, he did that which it is most dangerous to do, and most useless; that is, he wounded his pride without diminishing his importance. It is true that M. de Talleyrand never gave any visible sign of being irritated.

But few, whatever the philosophy with which they forgive an injury, pardon a humiliation; and thus, stronger and stronger grew by degrees that mutual dissatisfaction which the one vented at times in furious reproaches, and the other disguised under a studiously respectful indifference.

X.

This carelessness as to the feelings of those whom it would have been wiser not to offend, was one of the most fatal errors of the conqueror, who could not learn to subdue his own passions: but he had become at this time equally indifferent to the hatred and affection of his adherents; and, under the ordinary conviction of persons over-satisfied with themselves, fancied that everything depended on his own merits, and nothing on the merits of his agents. The victory of Wagram, and the marriage with Marie-Louise, commenced, indeed, a new era in his history. Fouché was dismissed, though not without meriting a reprimand for his intrigues; and Talleyrand fell into unequivocal disgrace, in some degree provoked by his witticisms; whilst round these two men gathered a quiet and observant opposition, descending with the clever adventurer to the lowest classes, and ascending with the dissatisfied noble to the highest.

The scion of the princely house of Périgord was, indeed, from his birth, quite as much as from his position in the Empire, at the head of the discontented of the aristocracy; M. de Talleyrand's house then (the only place, perhaps, open to all persons, where the government of the day was treated without reserve) became a sort of "rendezvous" for a circle which replied to a victory by a *bon mot*, and confronted the borrowed ceremonies of a new court by the natural graces and acknowledged fashions of an old one. All who remember society at this time, will remember that the ex-minister was the sole person who had a sort of existence and reputation, separate and distinct from the chief of the State, whose policy he now affected to consider, and probably did consider, as verging towards the passion of a desperate gambler, who would continue to tempt Fortune until she grew wearied and deserted him.

Nor did the Austrian alliance, which the Emperor had lately formed, meet with M. de Talleyrand's approval, although he had at one period advised it, and been also mixed up in the question of a marriage with the imperial family of Russia. This change might have proceeded from his now seeing that such an union as he had at one time favoured, in the hope that it would calm the restless energy of Napoleon, would only stimulate his ambition: or it might have been because, having had nothing to do with the resolutions adopted at Vienna, he had gained nothing by them. At all events, what he said with apparent sincerity, was—"Nothing is ever got by a policy which you merely carry out by halves." "If the Emperor wants an alliance with Austria, he should satisfy Austria: does he think that the House of Hapsburg considers it an honour to ally itself with the House of Bonaparte? What the Emperor of Austria desires, is to have his provinces restored, and his empire raised and revived: if the government of France does not do this, it disappoints him; and the worst enemies we can have are those we disappoint."

These sentiments, however, found as yet no echo out of the circle of a few independent and enlightened politicians.

I remember two of these—both high in the service of the Empire—M. de Barante and M. Molé, referring in my hearing to a conversation they had had at the period I am speaking of, and one saying to the other, "Do you call to mind how we both regarded what was passing before us as a magnificent scene in an opera, which, whilst it satisfied the eye with its splendour, did not fill the mind with a sense of its reality?"

But the masses were still dazzled by the splendid achievements of a man who, of all others, in ancient or modern history, would have been the greatest if he had joined the instincts of humanity with those of genius: but now each day that passed added to the fatal disposition which separated his future from his past; each hour he became more haughty and self-confident, and more inclined to an isolated career, which neither tolerated counsel nor clung to affection. Josephine, the wife of his youth—

Pauline, his favourite sister—Louis, his youngest brother —Massena, his ablest general—were added to the list on which his two ablest ministers were inscribed. He had no longer even the idea of conciliating mankind to his arbitrary authority. His mighty intellect, subdued by his still mightier ambition, submitted itself to adopt a system of despotism and oppression which interfered not only with the political opinions, but with the daily wants, of all his subjects and all his allies.

War with him had become an effort to exterminate those who still opposed him, by oppressing those who had hitherto aided him. Thus, he had seized the Roman pontiff, kidnapped the Spanish king, taken violent possession of the Hanseatic towns and the North of Germany; and even those countries which were free from his armies, were bound, as he contended, to obey his decrees. In this state of things commenced the last and fatal struggle between the two potentates, who a short time before had projected partitioning the empire of the world as friendly confederates, and were now prepared to contend for it as deadly foes. Nor was the justice of M. de Talleyrand's views ever more conspicuous! The destruction of Prussia, by making Russia and France neighbours, had in itself tended to make them enemies. Moreover, the proud and offended, but dissimulating Czar, though redoubling his courtesy towards the court of France after the choice of an Austrian archduchess, lest he might be supposed hurt by the rejection of a marriage with a princess of his own family, had begun to feel that, with the rest of continental Europe subdued and Austria apparently gained, he was alone in his independence; and to fret under the rein, which his imperious rider pulled, with superb indifference, somewhat too tightly.

Besides, though invested with unbounded authority over his people by law and custom, there was the example of his father to teach him that he could not wholly disregard their interests or wishes; yet this was what the Emperor of the French exacted from him. His subjects were not to sell their produce to the only purchaser who was ready and desirous to buy it;—and being thus harshly

and foolishly placed between revolution and war, Alexander chose the latter.

XI.

On the other hand, Napoleon, in determining on a conflict of which he did not disguise from himself the importance, awoke for a moment to his former sense of the necessity of using able men in great affairs, and was disposed, notwithstanding his disagreements with M. de Talleyrand, to send him to Warsaw to organise a kingdom of Poland; nor was it surprising that, confident in the sagacity and tact of the agent he thought of employing, he was also satisfied that, in the event of that agent's accepting employment, he might count perfectly on his fidelity; for throughout M. de Talleyrand's long career and frequent changes there is not any instance of his having betrayed any one from whom he accepted a trust. The difficulty of reconciling the Prince de Benevent's position with that of the Duc de Bassano, who accompanied the Emperor on this campaign as minister of foreign affairs, prevented, it is said, the projected arrangement. But neither during this transient gleam of returning favour, nor after it, did M. de Talleyrand's opinion against the chances which Napoleon was unnecessarily (as he thought) running, ever vary; neither were they disguised. He insisted principally on the chance of war, which often decides against the ablest general and the most skilful combinations; on the great loss which would result from a defeat, and the small gain that would follow a victory. The whole of Europe that the reckless general left behind him was, he knew, kept down merely by fear and constraint, and though ready to assist an advancing army, certain to fall on a retreating one. Besides, supposing defeat was almost impossible, what had France to gain by success?

Alexander might reiterate his promise of preventing all commercial interchange between Great Britain and his dominions; but would he be able to keep that promise? He could not. The mind of Napoleon, however, had now been trained by Fortune to consider wars mere military parades, shortly after the commencement of which he

entered the capital of his conquered enemy and returned to Paris to be greeted by enthusiastic acclamations at the theatre. He required this sort of excitement, and like most men similarly influenced, convinced himself that what was pleasing to his vanity was demanded by his interests.

There were three epochs, indeed, in Napoleon's career: the first, when he fought for glory abroad to gain empire at home; the second, when, being master of the government of France, he fought to extend the limits of France, and to make himself the most powerful individual in his nation, and his nation the most powerful nation in the world; the third, when France being but a secondary consideration, his ambition was bent on becoming master of the universe, and acquiring a dominion of which France would be almost an insignificant portion.

It is necessary to bear this in mind, since it explains Napoleon's Russian campaign; it explains the difficulties he raised against withdrawing his troops from Germany after that campaign had ended in defeat; and his constant dislike to accept any conditions that put a positive extinguisher on his gigantic projects. To support his own confidence in such projects he persuaded himself that a charm attached to his existence, that supernatural means would arrive to him when natural means failed. He did not, however, neglect on this occasion the natural means.

When Fouché expressed his apprehensions at so vast an enterprise, the soldier's answer is said to have been, "I wanted 800,000 men, and I have them."* But France had begun to be at this period wearied even with his successes; and the affair of Mallet, which happened just previously to the arrival of the bad intelligence from Russia, showed pretty clearly that her Emperor's fall or defeat left an open space for any new system that circumstances might favour or impose.

No sooner, then, had the news that Moscow was burnt reached Paris than M. de Talleyrand considered the Bonapartist cause as lost. Not that Bonaparte might not

* "Il me fallait 800,000 hommes, et je les ai."—*Mémoires de Fouché*, vol. ii. p. 113.

yet have saved himself by prudence, but he was not prudent; not but that the French government might not yet have brought as many men in uniform into the field as the allies, but that nations fought on one side, and merely soldiers on the other.

The sagacious statesman, therefore, who now began again to be consulted, advised a conclusion of the war, promptly, at once, and on almost all conditions. So, again, when the defection of the Prussians was known, and Napoleon summoned a council to determine what should be done under such circumstances, he said: "Negotiate: you have now in your hands effects which you can give away; to-morrow they may be gone, and then the power to negotiate advantageously will be gone also."*

During the armistice at Prague (June, 1813), when the prestige of two or three recent victories coloured the negotiations, and France might have had Holland, Italy, and her natural frontiers, both Talleyrand and Fouché, who was also asked for his advice, repeated constantly, "The Emperor has but one thing to do—to make peace; and the more quickly he makes it, the better he will make it." So also, when M. de St. Aignan, after the battle of Leipsic, brought propositions from Frankfort, which might even yet have given France her frontier of the Rhine (November), M. de Talleyrand urged their acceptance with the least delay, and told the Emperor that a bad peace was better than the continuation of a war that could not end favourably.†

Napoleon himself at this time wavered, and with a momentary doubt as to his own judgment, and a remembrance very possibly of happier times, offered the portfolio of foreign affairs to his ancient minister, but on the condition that he should lay down the rank and emoluments of vice-grand-elector.

The object of the Emperor was thus to make M. de Talleyrand entirely dependent on his place; but M. de

* *Mémoires de Rovigo*, vol. vi. p. 66.

† "Une mauvaise paix ne peut nous devenir aussi funeste que la continuation d'une guerre qui ne peut plus nous être favorable."—*Mémoires de Rovigo*, vol. vi. p. 229.

Talleyrand, who would have accepted the office, refused the condition, saying, "If the Emperor trusts me, he should not degrade me; and if he does not trust me, he should not employ me; the times are too difficult for half measures."

XII.

The state of affairs at this period was assuredly most critical. In looking towards Spain, there was to be seen an English army, crowned by victory, and about to descend from the Pyrenees. In looking towards Germany, there was a whole population, whom former defeat had exasperated, and recent success encouraged, burning to cross the Rhine in search of the trophies of which an enemy still boasted. In Italy, a defection in the Emperor's family was about to display the full extent of his misfortunes. In Holland, the colours of the exiled family (the House of Orange) were displayed with rapture amidst shouts for national independence; even the King of Denmark had left the French alliance; while in France a people unanimated by liberty, an army decimated by defeat, generals that had lost their hopes, and arsenals which were empty, were the sole resources with which its ruler had to encounter all Europe in arms.

The refusal of M. de Talleyrand, then, to accept office at such a time, unless with all the confidence and splendour that could give it authority, was natural enough; but it is also not surprising that the sovereign who had made that offer should have been irritated by its rejection, whilst many urged that the vice-grand-elector, if not employed, should be arrested. All proof, however, of treason was wanting; and the chief of the Empire justly dreaded the effect which, both at home and abroad, any violent act might produce; for it was far more difficult, than many have supposed, for him to strike, when his power was once on the decline, any strong blow against an eminent functionary. His government was a government of functionaries, throughout whom there reigned a sort of fraternity that could not safely be braved.

This stern man had, moreover,—and this was one of the most remarkable and amiable portions of his character—a

sort of tenderness, which he never overcame, for those who had once been attached to his person, or had done eminent service to his authority.* He resolved, then, not to take any violent measure against M. de Talleyrand; but though he could restrain his anger from acts, he could not from expressions.

A variety of scenes was the consequence. Savary relates one which happened in his presence and that of the arch-chancellor. I have also read of one in which Napoleon, having said that if he thought his own death likely he would take care that the vice-grand-elector should not survive him, was answered by M. de Talleyrand rejoining, quietly and respectfully, that he did not require that reason for desiring that his Majesty's life might be long preserved. M. Molé recounted to me another, in the following terms: "At the end of the Council of State, which took place just before the Emperor started for the campaign of 1814, he burst out into some violent exclamations of his being surrounded by treachery and traitors; and then turning to M. de Talleyrand, abused him for ten minutes in the most violent and outrageous manner. Talleyrand was standing by the fire all this time, guarding himself from the heat of the flame by his hat; he never moved a limb or a feature; any one who had seen him would have supposed that he was the last man in the room to whom the Emperor could be speaking; and finally, when Napoleon, slamming the door violently, departed, Talleyrand quietly took the arm of M. Mollien, and limped with apparent unconsciousness downstairs. But on getting home, he wrote a dignified letter to the Emperor, saying, that if he retained his present dignity, he should be by right one of the regency, and that as he could not think of holding such a charge after the opinion his Majesty had expressed of him, he begged to resign his post, and to be allowed to retire into the country. He was informed, however, that his resignation would not be accepted, and that he might stay where he was."

* "'Jamais,' dit-il au dignitaire qui le lui insinuait, 'jamais je ne donnerai la main à la perte d'un homme qui m'a longtemps servi.'"—*Mémoires de Roviyo*, vol. vi. p. 298.

It is to be presumed that insults like that I have been relating went a great way towards alienating and disgusting the person they were meant to humiliate; but though at the head of a considerable party which were dissatisfied, M. de Talleyrand did little more than watch the proceedings of 1814, and endeavour to make the fall of Napoleon, should it take place, as little injurious to France and to himself as possible.*

During the conferences at Chatillon, he told those whom the Emperor most trusted, that he would be lost if he did not take peace on any terms; when, however, towards the end of these conferences, peace seemed impossible with Napoleon, he permitted the Duc Dalberg to send M. de Vitrolles to the allied camp with the information, that, if the allies did not make war against France, but simply against its present ruler, they would find friends in Paris ready to help them. M. de Vitrolles carried a slip of paper from the Duc in his boot as his credentials, and was allowed to name M. de Talleyrand; but he had nothing from that personage himself which could compromise him irrevocably with this mission.

M. de Talleyrand saw, nevertheless, at that moment, that a new chief must, as a matter of course, be given to France, and he wished to be the person to decide who that chief should be, and under what sort of institutions the government should be assigned to him.

Still, his communications with the Bourbons were, I believe, merely indirect. Many of their partisans were his

* M. Thiers gives the account of such a scene as we have just described, but fixes it in 1809; nothing is omitted, not even the position of M. de Talleyrand and his hat; and in this account M. Thiers makes Napoleon accuse Talleyrand of the murder of the Duc d'Enghien.

I cannot but believe that M. Thiers's authority has been incorrect. Count Molé could not be mistaken as to dates and facts, for he was present at the scene I have related, and stated to me all the details, as I have given them, without touching on the Duc d'Enghien, which he certainly would have spoken of had Napoleon himself done so. The Emperor's reproaches were, according to Count Molé, entirely confined to what he considered were M. de Talleyrand's intrigues at that particular time—intrigues which were not, however, then further advanced than in clearing away the obstacles which might interfere with his defection, if Napoleon was ultimately defeated.

relatives and friends. He said obliging things of Louis XVIII. to them, and he received obliging messages in return: but he did not positively adopt their cause; in fact, it seems doubtful whether he did not for a certain time hesitate between the ancient race, and the King of Rome with a council of regency, in which he was to have had a place. At all events, he kept the minister of police, according to Savary's own account, alive to the Royalist movements in the south. It may even be said that he did not desert the Bonaparte dynasty till it deserted itself: for at the Council, assembled when the allies were approaching Paris to determine whether the Empress should remain in the capital or quit it, he advised her stay in the strongest manner, saying it was the best, if not the only, means of preserving the dynasty, and he did not cease urging this opinion until Joseph Bonaparte produced a letter from his brother, stating that in such a case as that under consideration Marie-Louise should retire into the provinces. It was then that, on leaving the council chamber, he said to Savary:

* "Here, then, is the end of all this. Is not that also your opinion? we lose the rubber with a fair game. Just see where the stupidity of a few ignorant men, who perseveringly work on the influence acquired by daily intercourse, ends by carrying one. In truth, the Emperor is much to be pitied, and yet nobody will pity him; for his obstinacy in holding to those who surround him, has no reasonable motive; it is only a weakness which cannot be conceived in such a man. What a fall in history! To give his name to adventures, instead of giving it to his age! When I think of this I cannot help being grieved.

* "Eh bien! voilà donc la fin de tout ceci. N'est-ce pas aussi votre opinion? Ma foi! c'est perdre une partie à beau jeu. Voyez un peu où mène la sottise de quelques ignorants qui exercent avec persévérance une influence de chaque jour. Pardieu! l'Empereur est bien à plaindre, et on ne le plaindra pas, parce que son obstination à garder son entourage n'a pas de motif raisonable; ce n'est que de la faiblesse qui ne se comprend pas dans un homme tel que lui. Voyez, monsieur, quelle chute dans l'histoire! Donner son nom à des aventures au lieu de le donner à son siècle! Quand je pense à cela je ne puis m'empêcher d'en gémir. Maintenant quel parti

And now what is to be done? It does not suit every one to be crushed under the ruins of the edifice that is to be overthrown. Well, we shall see what will happen!

"The Emperor, instead of abusing me, would have done better in estimating at their first value those who set him against me. He should have seen that friends of that kind are to be more dreaded than enemies. What would he say to another who let himself be reduced to the state in which he is now?"

XIII.

The observation that it did not suit every one to be overwhelmed under the ruins of the government about to fall, applied, as it was intended to do by M. de Talleyrand, to himself. The part, however, he had to play was still a difficult one; desirous to remain in Paris in order to treat with the allies, he was ordered, as a member of the regency, to Blois. Nor was it merely because he feared that Napoleon might yet conquer, and punish his disobedience, that he disliked to resist his command; there is a sense of decency in public men which sometimes supplies the place of principle, and the vice-grand-elector wished to avoid the appearance of deserting the cause which notwithstanding he had resolved to abandon.

The expedient he adopted was a singular and characteristic one. His state carriage was ordered and packed for the journey: he set out in it with great pomp and ceremony, and found, according to an arrangement previously made with Madame de Rémusat, her husband at the head of a body of the National Guard at the barrier, who stopped him, and, declaring he should remain in the capital, conducted him back to his hotel, in the Rue St. Florentin, in which he had soon the honour of receiving the Emperor Alexander.

prendre? Il ne convient pas à tout le monde de se laisser engloutir sous les ruines de cet édifice. Allons, nous verrons ce qui arrivera!

"L'Empereur, au lieu de me dire des injures, aurait mieux fait de juger ceux qui lui inspiraient des préventions; il aurait vu que des amis comme ceux-là sont plus à craindre que des ennemis. Que dirait-il d'un autre s'il s'était laissé mettre dans cet état?"—*Mémoires du Duc de Rovigo,* cités par M. Thiers.

The success of the campaign had been so rapid, the march to Paris so bold, the name of Napoleon and the valour of the French army were still so formidable, that the Emperor of the Russias was almost surprised at the situation in which he found himself, and desirous to escape from it by any peace that could be made safely, quickly, and with some chance of duration. Beyond this, he had no fixed idea. The re-establishment of the Bourbons, to which the English Government inclined, seemed to him in some respects dangerous, as well on account of the long absence of these princes from France, as from their individual character and the prejudices of their personal adherents. To a treaty with Napoleon he had also reasonable objection. Some intermediate plan was the one perhaps most present to his mind; a regency with Marie-Louise,—a substitution of Bernadotte for Bonaparte; but all plans of this sort were vague, and to be tested by the principle of establishing things in the manner most satisfactory to Europe, and least hateful to France.

Universal opinion pointed out M. de Talleyrand as the person not only most able to form, but most able to carry out at once whatever plan was best suited to the emergency. This is why, on arriving at Paris, the Emperor took up his abode at M. de Talleyrand's house, Rue St. Florentin, where he held, under the auspices of his host, a sort of meeting or council which determined the destiny of France.

XIV.

Among various relations concerning this council is that of M. Bourrienne, and if we are to believe this witness of the proceedings he recounts, M. de Talleyrand thus answered the Emperor's suggestion as to the crown prince of Sweden, and pronounced on the various pretensions that had been successively brought forward:

"Sire, you may depend upon it, there are but two things possible, Bonaparte or Louis XVIII. I say Bonaparte; but here the choice will not depend wholly on your Majesty, for you are not alone. If we are to have a soldier, however, let it be Napoleon; he is the first

in the world. I repeat it, sire: Bonaparte or Louis XVIII.; each represents a party, any other merely an intrigue."

It was a positive opinion thus forcibly expressed that, according to all accounts, decided the conqueror, who is said to have declared subsequently:

"When I arrived at Paris, I had no plan. I referred everything to Talleyrand; he had the family of Napoleon in one hand, and that of the Bourbons in the other; I took what he gave me."

The resolution not to treat with Napoleon or his family being thus taken, M. de Talleyrand engaged the Emperor of Russia to make it known by a proclamation placarded on the walls of Paris, and the public read in every street that "Les souverains alliés ne traiteront plus ni avec Napoléon Bonaparte ni avec aucun membre de sa famille."

But this was not all. M. de Talleyrand did not wish to escape from the despotism of Napoleon to fall under that of Louis XVIII. He counted little on royal gratitude, and it was as necessary for his own security, as for that of his country, that the passions of the emigration and the pride of the House of Bourbon should be kept in check by a constitution. Hence, at his instigation, the famous proclamation I refer to contained the following sentence: "Ils reconnaîtront et garantiront la constitution que la nation française se donnera, et invitent par conséquent le Sénat à désigner un gouvernement provisoire qui puisse pourvoir aux besoins de l'administration; il préparera la constitution qui conviendra au peuple français. Alexandre. 31 mars 1814."

In this manner the allies recognised the Senate as the representative of the French nation, and, as M. de Talleyrand had a predominant influence with the Senate, his victory seemed secure.

This was on the 31st March. But on the 30th, late towards the night, and as Marmont and Mortier, having defended the heights of Paris valiantly during the day, were quitting that city in virtue of a capitulation they had been compelled by the circumstances in which they found themselves to sign, Napoleon, who had taken the advance

of his army, arrived at the environs of his capital, and learnt from General Belliard, who was leaving it, what had occurred. With the view of collecting his troops, still on their march, at Fontainebleau, and gaining time for this purpose, he sent Caulincourt, who had represented him at Chatillon, to the sovereigns, who were then masters of the situation, with orders to enter into feigned negotiations with them, on almost any terms.

Now, though the Czar and the King of Prussia had pretty well resolved to have nothing further to do with Napoleon, and had stated that resolution in a pretty decided manner, there was disquietude in the neighbourhood of the great captain, who could rely on a military force, amounting, it was said, to 50,000, exclusive of the forces of Marmont and Mortier. The armies of Augereau and Soult also still existed at no immense distance. The lower class in Paris, who had more national sentiments and less personal interests in jeopardy than the upper, were, as it had been remarked in the passage of the Russian and Prussian troops through Paris, moody and discontented; a shadow of the former terror of Napoleon's power still remained on the minds of many who had so long bowed to his will, and were only half disposed to overthrow his authority. Negotiations, as Caulincourt's presence at Paris proved, would be attempted.

There was no time, then, to be lost. On the 1st April, M. de Talleyrand assembled the Senate under his presidence (for, as vice-president and grand dignitary of the Empire, this function legitimately belonged to him). That body, surprised at its own power, and placing it readily in its president's hands, who (alluding to Marie-Louise's retreat) called on them to come to the aid of a state without any constituted authority, named, "*séance tenante*," "a provisional government," consisting, with M. de Talleyrand at its head, of five members. These persons had all played an honourable and distinguished part under the Empire or in the National Assembly, but the only one representing Legitimist opinions was the Abbé Montesquieu.

At the same time the Senate, entirely partaking M. de

Talleyrand's ideas as to a constitution, engaged itself to form one within a few days.

Nothing, however, was as yet said of the intended exclusion of Napoleon and his family, nor of the approaching reign of the Bourbons.

Many of the partisans of the latter were as much astonished as vexed at this omission.

Still entertaining ideas which they had carried into a long exile, they could not even conceive what France, or the French Senate, or the allies, had to do with the disposal of the French government. Was not Louis XVIII. the next in blood to Louis XVI.? Could there be a doubt that he was the only possible king, the unholy and audacious usurper having been defeated?

Did not the Comte d'Artois, said the ladies of the Faubourg St. Germain, long to embrace his early associate, the Bishop of Autun?

M. de Talleyrand, with a smile slightly cynical, acknowledged the extreme happiness that this embrace would give him; but begged, half mysteriously, that it might be deferred for the present. He did not, however, think it expedient that the Senate should delay any longer confirming the act of the coalition as to Napoleon's deposition; and that assembly (exposing, as the motives of its conduct, a thousand grievances which it had been its previous duty to prevent), declared, as the Emperor Alexander had already declared, that neither Napoleon nor his family should reign in France, and relieved the nation from its oath of allegiance.

It named also a ministry composed of men suited for the occasion, and thus assumed provisionally all the attributes of government.

In the meantime the deposed Emperor, still at Fontainebleau, with an energy which misfortune had not abated, was counting his gathering forces, studying the position of his foes, and forming the plan for a final and desperate effort, which consisted in defeating one of the three divisions of the enemy, which was on the left bank of the Seine, and following it in its flight into the streets of Paris, where, amidst the general confusion, he felt certain of an

easy victory, even if amongst the blazing ruins of the imperial city.

With him losses that led to success were not calculated: and though he would have preferred victory on other terms, he was perfectly willing to take it as he could get it. At least, this was said; and the intention attributed to him, and which he did not deny, having being promulgated before it was executed, shattered the remaining fidelity of his superior officers. He could not understand their timorous scruples; nor they his desperate resolves. An altercation ensued, and, rendered bold by despair, the marshals ventured to urge his abdication in favour of his son. He foresaw the futility of this proposition, but was nevertheless induced to accede to it, partly in order to show the idleness of the hopes which his unwelcome counsellors affected to cherish, partly in order to get rid of their presence, and thus to find himself free, as he thought, to execute his original projects, should he determine on doing so.

Ney, Macdonald, together with Caulincourt, who had rejoined the Emperor on the 2nd of April, and communicated the inefficacy of his previous mission, were sent then to the allied sovereigns; they were to enumerate their remaining forces, protest as to their unwavering fidelity to that family, the fortunes of which they had so long followed—declare resolutely against the legitimate princes, whom they considered strangers to their epoch; and state, with firmness, their resolve to conquer or perish by the side of their ancient master, if this, the last proposal they could make in his name, were rejected.

They carried with them Marmont, at the head of the important division of Bonaparte's army stationed on the Essonne, and commanding the position of Fontainebleau. This general, though the one most favoured by Napoleon, had nevertheless already entered into a capitulation with the Austrian general; but, urged by his brother marshals, to whom he confessed his treason, to retract his engagements, he did so; and ordering those officers under his command, and who had been acquainted with his designs, to remain quiet till his return, accompanied Ney and Macdonald to

Paris. The haughty bearing, the bold and vehement language, of men accustomed to command and conquer, and representing an army which had marched victoriously from Paris to Moscow, made an impression on the somewhat flexible Alexander. He did not accord nor deny their petition, and granted them another interview on the morrow, at which the King of Prussia was to be present. This one took place on the 5th of April, at two in the morning, with himself alone.

The struggle was yet undecided; for the Emperor of Russia was never very favourable, as I have said, to the Legitimists, and quite alive to the consideration of settling matters quietly with Bonaparte, who had arms in his hands, rather than with the Bourbons, who had not. M. de Talleyrand had again to exert himself, and with his easy, respectful, but self-confident manner, to point out the feebleness and dishonour of which (though acting under feelings of the noblest generosity) the Czar would be accused, if, after having compromised himself and his allies by what he had been doing during the last few days, he was at last to undo it. He added, as it is said, that he did not, in holding this language, consult his own interests, for it was probable that he should have a more durable position under the regency of Marie-Louise, if such a regency could be durable, than under that of the emigration, which, it was much to be feared, from what was then passing (he wished to call the Emperor's attention to the efforts which this party was at that very moment making against the publication of a constitution), would, ere long, become more powerful and more forgetful than could be desired. "Pardon my observations, sire," he continued—"others are uneasy, but I am not—for I know full well that a sovereign at the head of a valorous army is not likely to admit the dictation of a few officers of a hostile force, more particularly when they represent the very principle of constant war which the French nation repudiates, and which has armed the allies."

Both the Emperor Alexander (whose transitory emotion soon passed away) and the King of Prussia received the marshals on the following day, under the impressions that

M. de Talleyrand's remarks and their own considerate judgment produced; and the refusal to treat on any basis that gave the government of France to Napoleon or his family, was clearly but courteously pronounced. The marshals were persisting in their representations, when a Russian officer, who had just entered the room, whispered something into Alexander's ear: it was the intelligence that the division of Marshal Marmont had quitted its post; an accident produced by the officers, to whom he had confided his troops, having fancied that their intended treachery was discovered, and would be punished, unless immediately consummated. After such a defection, the moral power of the deputation, which could no longer speak in the name of the army, was gone; and all it attempted to procure was an honourable provision for the Emperor and the Empress, if the former tendered an immediate abdication. The advice of his generals, who accepted these poor conditions, left their commander no alternative but submission, for his government was a military machine, of which the main instrument now broke in his hands.

On the 6th, the Senate framed a constitution, which, on the 8th, was published, creating a constitutional monarchy, with two chambers, and conferring the throne of France on Louis XVIII. if he accepted that constitution. On the 11th was signed a treaty by which Marie-Louise and her son received the principality of Parma, and Napoleon the sovereignty of Elba, a small island on the coast of Italy, where it was presumed that a man, still in the prime of life, and with the most restless spirit that ever beat in human bosom, would remain quiet and contented in the sight of empires he had won and lost.

Part V.

FROM THE FALL OF THE EMPEROR NAPOLEON, IN 1814, TO THE END OF M. DE TALLEYRAND'S ADMINISTRATION, IN SEPTEMBER, 1815.

Comte d'Artois, Lieutenant-General of France.—Treaty of the 23rd of April for the evacuation of France.—Louis XVIII., contrary to M. de Talleyrand's advice, refuses to accept the crown with a constitution as the gift of the nation; but, agreeing to the first as a right, grants the second.—Forms his government of discordant materials, naming M. de Talleyrand, of whom his distrust and jealousy soon appear, Minister of Foreign Affairs.—Reactionary spirit of the Émigré party and Comte d'Artois.—Treaty of Paris.—M. de Talleyrand then goes to Vienna, and, in the course of negotiations there, contrives to make a separate treaty with Austria and Great Britain, and thus to break up solidarity of the alliance against France.—Bonaparte escapes from Elba.—New treaty against Napoleon; not clear as to its intentions, but appearing as renewal of Treaty of Paris.—Bourbons go to Ghent.—Bonaparte installed at the Tuileries.—M. de Talleyrand goes to Carlsbad.—Prince Metternich intrigues with Fouché for Napoleon's deposition in favour of the regency of his wife; does not succeed.—The Allies again take up Louis XVIII.—M. de Talleyrand goes to Ghent.—At first ill received.—Lectures the Bourbons.—Is again made Minister.—Opposed by Royalist party and the Emperor of Russia; feebly supported by us; abandoned by Louis XVIII.—Resigns.

I.

Such for the moment was the end of the long struggle which M. de Talleyrand had maintained with a man superior to all others in the power of his faculties; but who, owing to certain faults, which were perhaps inseparable from the haughty and imaginative nature of those faculties, was finally vanquished by the patience, moderation, and tact of an adversary of far inferior genius, whose hostility he had, by a singular instinct, dreaded, and, by an unaccountable carelessness, provoked.

I have said that when M. de Talleyrand first attached himself to the destinies of Napoleon, he expected from

him—first, his own advancement; secondly, the advancement of French interests.

He followed Napoleon, then, obsequiously up to the period at which he foresaw clearly that the policy of that personage was beginning to be such as would neither profit an intelligent adherent nor establish a durable empire.

It cannot be said, however, that in separating himself from this policy, after the treaty of Tilsit, he left his sovereign in a moment of adversity. France never appeared to people in general so great, nor its ruler so stable, as at that epoch. It was not at the moment of any evident decline in either, but at a moment when to a keen observer there was visible a tendency which if pursued would, a little sooner or a little later, plunge both into inextricable calamities, that the Prince de Benevent detached himself quietly from the chariot that bore the great soldier's fortunes.

Even then he did little more than express with moderation the convictions he felt; and indeed his opposition when most provoked was never against the individual whom he had served, but against the system that individual was blindly pursuing. As the horizon grew darker, he neither shrank from giving his advice, which events proved invariably to be just, nor refused his services, if they were allowed the necessary means of being useful. His infidelity up to the last consisted in giving counsel that was rejected, and taking measures with much reserve for preserving himself and his country in some degree from the fate that was preparing for its ruler. Nor was it until Napoleon and the nation became two distinct things, and it appeared necessary to destroy the one in order to save the other, that it can be said that M. de Talleyrand conspired against the man, who, it must be added, never asked for heartfelt devotion in exacting blind obedience.

There was nothing on earth, in fact, which Napoleon himself would not have sacrificed, and did not unscrupulously sacrifice, to promote his own objects. He said, and I believe thought, that these were the happiness and

glory of France. Behind his selfishness there was, all must admit, a great and noble idea; but those who felt sure that he was mistaken were not bound to subject their notions of patriotism to his: M. de Talleyrand had not been his creature, nor raised up from the dust by him. He had been a distinguished and eminent man before General Bonaparte's career had commenced, and it is hardly fair to talk of his treachery to a man, who had of late years wearied him with affronts,—when the most intimate of that man's favourites (Marshal Berthier) told Louis XVIII. at the commencement of the Restoration, "that France had groaned for twenty-five years under the weight of misfortunes that only disappeared at the sight of its legitimate sovereign."

The principal if not the only question at issue concerning M. de Talleyrand in these affairs is, Whether the advice to place Louis XVIII. on the French throne was good or bad advice? What other candidates were there? Bonaparte vanquished was out of the question. He had not only become odious to M. de Talleyrand; he was equally so to all Europe and to all France,—the broken fragments of his army excepted.

There was something to say in favour of a regency with Marie-Louise; but her husband himself declared at Fontainebleau that she was incapable of acting for herself. If Napoleon was in a situation to direct her, the government was evidently still Napoleon's. If she was placed in the hands of the marshals, the exchange was that of a military empire with order and a redoubtable chief, for a military empire with confusion and without a chief; Marie-Louise was, moreover, out of Paris.

Had she remained at Paris, had Bonaparte perished on the field of battle, or been placed anywhere in secure guardianship, the daughter of the Emperor of Austria, assisted and controlled by four or five men of eminence, moderation, and capacity, whom the allies could have joined to her, might have been a possibility more compatible perhaps with the epoch than the half-forgotten inheritor of the crown of Louis XVI.; but when the choice was to be made, this combination had gone by.

Then there was the House of Orleans. But this younger branch of the Bourbon family was personally almost as unknown to France as the elder one. The name that connected it with the Revolution was not popular, on the other hand, even with the revolutionists. A mere soldier put on Napoleon's throne by foreigners was an evident humiliation to the French people. Louis XVIII., therefore, really seems the only person at the moment who could carry with him to the vacant place any dignity, and represent there, as M. de Talleyrand said, any principle.

This prince in early life had been supposed favourable to constitutional government. His residence of late years had been in a constitutional country. He had never been remarkable for the strength of his personal attachments, and he had, moreover, in his character, or at least in his manner, a certain authority, which rendered it probable that he would keep in order the more zealous of his partisans.

Thus, it seemed likely that he would frankly accept such a government as England possessed and France had desired in 1789, to the opinions of which period the more thinking portions of the French nation still looked back with respect.

Risks had to be run, whatever resolution might be taken; but risks in critical times have always to be run, and a man of action can only choose the least dangerous.

II.

At all events, having deliberately adopted the legitimate monarchy with a constitution, there can be no doubt as to M. de Talleyrand having followed up this idea, amidst immense difficulties, with great boldness and dexterity. The task, however, so far as it depended on his skill, tact, and activity, was now nearly over; and its ultimate success was about to be confided to those who were to reap the fruits of his efforts. It will have been seen, by what I have said of the constitution voted by the Senate, that Louis XVIII. was named King conditionally on his accepting a constitution; a clause against which the Royalists had revolted.

The Comte d'Artois, at that time out of Paris and in no recognised position, insisted on appearing in the capital; and, Napoleon having abdicated on the 11th, he executed his intention on the 12th, assuming the title of "Lieutenant-general of the Kingdom," a title which he pretended to have received from his brother, but which his brother, it appears, had never given him.

Nothing could be more awkward than the position thus created: Louis XVIII. was not yet sovereign by any national act; and yet the Comte d'Artois pretended that he was invested with royal authority by Louis XVIII.

To establish as a right the Bourbon monarchy, was by no means the intention of those who had called back the Bourbon family; and yet they had so compromised themselves to the Bourbon cause, that it was no easy matter to recede from the ground they stood upon. The resolution to be taken had to be immediate. Should the existing authorities assist at the Comte d'Artois' entry or not? M. de Talleyrand and the provisional government did assist, for their abstinence would have been a scandal; the Senate did not assist, for its presence would have stultified its previous decisions.

I am led to insert an animated account of this entry, not only because it is painted with the colouring of an eye-witness; but because it gives an amusing description of the concoction of a celebrated *bon mot*, which was not without its effect on the early popularity of the prince to whom it was attributed.

* "Next morning (12th of April), we marched out to meet the prince. It was one of those lovely days of early spring which are so delightful in the climate of Paris. The sun was shining with all its splendour, and on every side the tender buds were sprouting under the influence of its subdued and genial warmth. There were flowers

* "Le lendemain, 12 avril, on se mit en marche pour aller au-devant de Monsieur. Le temps était admirable; c'était un de ces premiers jours du printemps, ravissants sous la température de Paris, où le soleil brille de tout son éclat, et ne distribue qu'une chaleur douce aux germes encore tendres qui sourdissent de toutes parts. Quelques fleurs déjà entr'ouvertes, un vert tendre qui commençait à

already half blown, and the soft green was just beginning to peep from the trees, while the spring notes of birds, the joyous expression of every face, our march enlivened by the dear old tune of good King Henry, all served to mark out this day as a festival of Hope. There was little order in our ranks, but many shed tears. As soon as *Monsieur* was in sight, M. de Talleyrand advanced to welcome him, and, leaning against the prince's horse with that indolent grace, which the weakness of his legs excused, he paid him a short compliment, remarkable for its delicacy and good taste. Feeling that Frenchmen were pressing him on all sides, the prince was too affected to make him a reply, but said with a voice stifled by sobs, 'Monsieur de Talleyrand, gentlemen.—Thank you—I am too happy—Let us proceed, let us proceed—I am too happy!'

"Since then, we have heard the same prince reply to speeches with presence of mind and effect: but, to those who saw and heard him the day of his entry into Paris, he has never been so eloquent as on that occasion. We now proceeded in the direction of Notre-Dame, according to the old custom of going, after every joyful event, to the most venerable church of Paris, in order to offer solemnly to God the grateful homage of the French nation. The procession was principally composed of National Guards, but it also

poindre sur les arbres, le chant des oiseaux printaniers, l'air de joie répandu sur les figures, et le vieux refrain du bon Henri qui marquait la marche, avaient signalé cette entrée comme la fête de l'Espérance. Il y régnait peu d'ordre, mais on y répandait des larmes. Dès qu'on vit paraître le prince, M. de Talleyrand alla à sa rencontre, et en s'appuyant sur le cheval du prince, avec la grâce nonchalante qu'autorise la faiblesse de ses jambes, il lui débita un compliment en quatre lignes, frappé au coin d'une sensibilité exquise. Le prince, qui, de toutes parts se sentait pressé par des Français, était trop ému pour pouvoir répondre; il dit, d'une voix étouffée par les sanglots: 'Monsieur de Talleyrand, Messieurs, je vous remercie; je suis trop heureux. Marchons, marchons, je suis trop heureux!'

"Nous avons entendu depuis, le même prince répondre avec de la présence d'esprit et du bonheur aux harangues qu'on lui faisait, mais, pour ceux qui l'ont vu et qui l'ont entendu à son entrée à Paris, il ne fut jamais aussi éloquent que ce jour-là. Le cortége se mit en marche pour Notre-Dame, suivant l'antique usage d'aller porter à Dieu, dans la première église de Paris, les hommages solennels des Français pour chaque événement heureux. La garde nationale

contained Russian, Prussian, Austrian, Spanish, and Portuguese officers, and the prince at their head appeared like an angel of peace descended into the midst of the great European family. From the Barrière de Bondy to the Parvis Notre-Dame, faces beaming with joy were seen at every window. The streets were crowded with people who pressed round the prince with shouts of applause. It was difficult for him to advance in the midst of such general enthusiasm, but when some one attempted to clear the way by removing this pleasing impediment, he exclaimed, 'Never mind, sir, never mind, we have plenty of time before us.' Thus was the prince borne along to Notre-Dame, if I may be allowed the expression, on the hearts of Frenchmen. After entering the sanctuary, when he cast himself down before the altar, which had received during so many centuries the prayers of his fathers, a vivid ray of light fell upon his countenance, and made it appear almost heavenly. He prayed fervently, and we all did the same. The tears trickled down our cheeks, and they escaped from the eyes even of the foreigners. Oh! how sincerely, how fervently was each verse of the hymn of gratitude upraised to Heaven! When the ceremony was concluded, several of the prince's old servants, who had bewailed his absence

formait le fond du cortége, mais il se composait aussi d'officiers russes, prussiens, autrichiens, espagnols, portugais, à la tête desquels le prince apparaissait comme un ange de paix descendu au milieu de la grande famille européenne. Depuis la Barrière de Bondy jusqu'au Parvis Notre-Dame, il n'y avait pas une fenêtre qui ne fût garnie de figures rayonnantes de joie. Le peuple, répandu dans les rues, poursuivait le prince de ses applaudissements et de ses cris. A peine pouvait-il avancer au milieu de l'ivresse générale, et il répondit à quelqu'un qui voulait écarter de si douces entraves: 'Laissez, Monsieur, laissez, j'arriverai toujours trop tôt.'

"C'est ainsi que le prince fut, s'il est permis de le dire, porté jusqu'à Notre-Dame sur les cœurs des Français; et à son entrée dans le sanctuaire, lorsqu'il se prosterna aux pieds de l'autel, qui avait, durant tant de siècles, reçu les prières de ses pères, un rayon de lumière très-vive vint frapper sur sa figure et lui imprima je ne sais quoi de céleste. Il priait avec ardeur; tous priaient avec lui. Des larmes mouillaient nos yeux; il en échappait aux étrangers eux-mêmes. Oh! avec quelle vérité, avec quelle ardeur, chaque strophe de l'hymne de la reconnaissance était poussée vers les cieux! A la fin de la cérémonie, de vieux serviteurs du prince qui avaient pleuré

during thirty years, came to embrace his knees, and he raised them up with that heart-sprung grace so touching and so natural to him. The return from Notre-Dame to the Tuileries was no less animated and happy; and when he had reached the court of the palace, the prince dismounted, and turning to the National Guard, addressed them in a speech perfectly suited to the occasion. He shook hands with several of the officers and men, begging them to remember this happy day, and protesting that he himself would never forget it. I ordered the palace doors to be opened for the prince, and had the honour of showing him into the wing which he was to inhabit.

"I asked him to give me his orders for the rest of the day, and to tell me the hour at which I should present myself the next morning. He seemed to hesitate whether he would dismiss or retain me. I thought I could perceive that this arose from kindly feeling, so I told him that I should be afraid of troubling him an instant longer, as he must be fatigued, and it was to me that he replied, 'How can I possibly be fatigued? This is the only happy day I have enjoyed for thirty years. Ah! sir, what a delightful day! Say that I am pleased

trente ans son absence embrassaient ses genoux, et il les relevait avec cette grâce du cœur si touchante et qui lui est si naturelle. Le retour, de Notre-Dame aux Tuileries ne fut pas moins animé, moins heureux, et, parvenu dans la cour du palais, le prince descendit le cheval et adressa à la garde nationale une allocution parfaitement appliquée à la situation. Il prit la main à plusieurs officiers et soldats, les pria de se souvenir de ce beau jour, et leur protesta que lui-même ne l'oublierait jamais. Je fis ouvrir devant le prince les portes du palais et j'eus l'honneur de l'introduire dans l'aile qu'il devait habiter.

"Je lui demandai ses ordres pour le reste de la journée, et l'heure à laquelle je devais me présenter le lendemain pour le travail. Le prince paraissait hésiter s'il me laisserait partir ou me retiendrait. Je crus m'apercevoir que c'était indulgence de sa part, et je lui dis que je craindrais de l'occuper une minute de plus, parce que je le supposais fatigué, et c'est à moi qu'il répondit:—'Comment voulez-vous que je sois fatigué? C'est le seul jour de bonheur que j'ai goûté depuis trente ans. Ah! monsieur, quelle belle journée! Dites que je suis heureux et satisfait de tout le monde. Voilà mes ordres pour aujourd'hui—à demain, á neuf heurés du matin.'

and satisfied with everybody. These are my orders for to-day. To-morrow morning, at nine o'clock.'

"After leaving the prince, I resumed my usual occupation, and quitted it at about eleven o'clock in the evening, to go to M. de Talleyrand's. I found him discussing the events of the past day with MM. Pasquier, Dupont de Némours, and Anglès. They all agreed that it had been a complete success. M. de Talleyrand reminded us that an article would have to be written for the *Moniteur*. Dupont offered to do it. 'No, no,' replied M. de Talleyrand, 'you would make it too poetical; I know you well: Beugnot will do for that; I dare say that he will step into the library, and knock us off an article in a moment.'

"I sat down to my work, which was not very difficult: but when the prince's answer to M. de Talleyrand had to be mentioned, I did not know what to do. A few words, springing from a deep emotion, make effect by the manner in which they are spoken, and by the presence of the objects which have suggested them; but, when they have to be reproduced on paper, stripped of these accompaniments, they remain cold, and it is very lucky if they are not ridiculous. I returned to M. de Talleyrand, and informed him of the difficulty. 'Let us see,' he answered, 'what *Monsieur did* say; I did not catch

"En quittant le prince, je repris mon travail ordinaire et je le quittai sur les onze heures du soir pour aller chez M. de Talleyrand. Je le trouvai s'entretenant de la journée avec MM. Pasquier, Dupont de Némours, et Anglès. On s'accordait à la trouver parfaite. M. de Talleyrand rappela qu'il fallait un article au *Moniteur*. Dupont s'offrit de le faire. 'Non pas,' reprit M. de Talleyrand, 'vous y mettriez de la poésie; je vous connais. Beugnot suffit pour cela; qu'il passe dans la bibliothèque et qu'il broche bien vite un article pour que nous l'envoyions à Sauvo.'

"Je me mets à la besogne qui n'était pas fort épineuse, mais parvenu à la mention de la réponse du prince à M. de Talleyrand, j'y suis embarrassé. Quelques mots echappés à un sentiment profond produisent de l'effet par le ton dont ils sont prononcés, par la présence des objets qui les ont provoqués, mais quand il s'agit de les traduire sur le papier, dépouillés de ces entours, ils ne sont plus que froids, et trop heureux s'ils ne sont pas ridicules. Je reviens à M. de Talleyrand, et je lui fais part de la difficulté.—'Voyons,' me répondit-il,

much; he appeared to me to be affected, and very anxious to continue his journey; but, if what he said does not suit you, invent an answer for him.' 'But how can I make a speech that *Monsieur* never pronounced?' 'There is no difficulty about that; make it good, suitable to the person and to the occasion, and I promise you that *Monsieur* will accept it, and so well, that in two days he will believe he made it himself; and he *will* have made it himself; you will no longer have had anything to do with it.' Capital! I returned and attempted my first version, and brought it to be approved. 'That won't do,' said M. de Talleyrand, '*Monsieur* never makes antitheses, nor does he use the slightest rhetorical flourish. Be brief, be plain, and say what is best suited to the speaker and to his audience: that's all.' 'It seems to me,' replied M. Pasquier, 'that what is troubling a good many minds, is the fear of changes, which would be brought about by the return of the princes of the house of Bourbon; that point would perhaps have to be touched, but delicately.' 'Good! and I also recommend it to you,' said M. de Talleyrand. I attempt a new version, and am sent back a second time, for having made it too long and too elaborate. At last I am delivered of the one inserted in the *Moniteur*, in which I make the prince say,

'qu'a dit *Monsieur*? Je n'ai pas entendu grand'chose; il me paraissait ému et fort curieux de continuer sa route; mais si ce qu'il a dit ne vous convient pas, faites-lui une réponse.' 'Mais comment faire un discours que *Monsieur* n'a pas tenu?' 'La difficulté n'est pas là: faites-le bon, convenable à la personne et au moment, et je vous promets que *Monsieur* l'acceptera, et si bien, qu'au bout de deux jours il croira l'avoir fait, et il l'aura fait; vous n'y serez plus pour rien.' A la bonne heure! Je rentre, j'essaye une première version, et je l'apporte à la censure. 'Ce n'est pas cela,' dit M. de Talleyrand, '*Monsieur* ne fait pas d'antithèses et pas la plus petite fleur de rhétorique. Soyez court, soyez simple, et dites ce qui convient davantage à celui qui parle et à ceux qui écoutent; voilà tout.' 'Il me semble,' reprit M. Pasquier, 'que ce qui agite bon nombre d'esprits est la crainte des changements que doit occasionner le retour des princes de la maison de Bourbon; il faudrait peut-être toucher ce point, mais avec délicatesse.' 'Bien! et je le recommande,' dit M. de Talleyrand. 'J'essaye une nouvelle version et je suis renvoyé une seconde fois, parce que j'ai été trop long et que le style est apprêté. Enfin j'accouche de celle qui est au *Moniteur*, et

'No more discord; Peace and France; at last I revisit my native land; nothing is changed, except it be that there is one Frenchman the more.' 'This time I give in!' exclaimed the great censor. '*That* is what *Monsieur* said, and I answer for it having been pronounced by him; you need not trouble yourself any longer.' And in fact the speech turned out a regular success: the newspapers took it up as a lucky hit; it was also repeated as an engagement taken by the prince; and the expression, '*One Frenchman more!*' became the necessary password of the harangues, which began to pour in from all quarters. The prince did not disdain commenting upon it in his answers: and M. de Talleyrand's prophecy was fully accomplished."

III.

The just described spectacle was gay, but its gaiety was merely superficial. Deeper seated was the danger I have referred to. The Senate had neither gone to meet the Comte d'Artois nor attended the *Te Deum*. It might be said that the members of the provisional government had done so; but the absence of the Senate was, notwithstanding, remarked. It was determined not to leave things uncertain, and to have a clear understanding as to whether the Comte d'Artois meant to despise the national authorities, or to submit to them. This question had to be brought to issue with the least possible delay.

The 13th and 14th of April were spent in negotiations. Napoleon was still in France. Two armies had not yet given in their adhesion to the new order of things.

The allies had solemnly declared that the French

où je fais dire au prince: 'Plus de divisions: la paix et la France; je la revois enfin; et rien n'y est changé, si ce n'est qu'il s'y trouve un Français de plus.' 'Pour cette fois je me rends!' reprit enfin le grand censeur, 'c'est bien là le discours de *Monsieur*, et je vous réponds que c'est lui qui l'a fait; vous pouvez être tranquille à présent.' Et en effet le mot fit fortune: les journaux s'en emparèrent comme d'un à propos heureux; on le reproduisit aussi comme un engagement pris par le prince, et le mot, '*un Français de plus!*' devint le passeport obligé des harangues qui vinrent pleuvoir de toutes parts. Le prince ne dédaigna pas de le commenter dans ses réponses, et la prophétie de M. de Talleyrand fut complétement réalisée."

government should be one chosen by the Senate, and not one chosen by Louis XVIII.

It took, nevertheless, all M. de Talleyrand's tact and patience to get the Comte d'Artois and the zealots of his party to act with ordinary prudence. An arrangement was at last arrived at in this manner:

The Senate, professing to know that constitutional principles animated the heart of the Comte d'Artois, offered him the Lieutenant-generalship of France.

The Comte d'Artois accepted the post, saying that though he could not take upon himself to sanction the constitution of the Senate, with which he was acquainted, but which had to be considered by the King, he nevertheless felt sure that he could safely affirm that his Majesty would accept the principal features in it.*

* Page 41, *du Consulat.*—"A huit heures du soir le Sénat se présenta aux Tuileries, ayant en tête son président, M. de Talleyrand. Ce personnage si bien fait pour les représentations où il fallait tempérer le fermeté par une exquise politesse, s'approcha du Prince, et selon sa coutume s'appuyant sur une canne, la tête penchée sur l'épaule, lut un discours à la fois fier et adroit, dans lequel il expliquait la conduite du Sénat sans l'excuser, car elle n'avait pas besoin d'excuse.

"'Le Sénat,' disait-il, 'a provoqué le retour de votre auguste maison au trône de France. Trop instruit par le présent et le passé, il désire avec la nation affermir pour jamais l'autorité royale sur une juste division des pouvoirs, et sur la liberté publique, seules garanties du bonheur et des intérêts de tous.

"'Le Sénat, persuadé que les principes de la constitution nouvelle sont dans votre cœur, vous défère, par le décret que j'ai l'honneur de vous présenter le titre de lieutenant-général du royaume jusqu'à l'arrivée du Roi, votre auguste frère. Notre respectueuse confiance ne peut mieux honorer l'antique loyauté qui vous fut transmise par vos ancêtres.

"'Monseigneur, le Sénat, en ces moments d'allégresse publique, obligé de rester en apparence plus calme sur la limite de ses devoirs, n'en est pas moins pénétré des sentiments universels. Votre Altesse Royale lira dans nos cœurs à travers la retenue même de notre langage.'"

* * * * * *

M. de Talleyrand joignit à ces paroles fermes et respectueuses les protestations de dévouement qui étaient alors dans toutes les bouches; il y mit de moins la banalité et la bassesse qui se rencontraient dans presque toutes.

"Le Prince répondit par le texte de la déclaration convenue.

The government was thus installed until the arrival of Louis XVIII.; and on the 23rd, M. de Talleyrand signed, under his royal highness's authority, the treaty which obliged the foreign armies to quit France, and the French troops to quit the fortresses out of France which they still held.

IV.

The most urgent foreign question was thus settled; but the permanent condition of internal affairs, though the temporary arrangement I have been describing established something like a principle in favour of a constitution, still depended on the arrangements that might finally be made with Louis XVIII.

M. de Talleyrand, exceedingly anxious on this subject, had sent M. de Liancourt to the King, in the hope that his Majesty would listen and speak to his messenger confidentially. It was true that M. de Talleyrand was warned that the Duc de Liancourt, who had belonged to the Revolution, would not be well received by the monarch of the Restoration, if a certain nobleman, M. de Blacas, was by his side. But the Prince de Benevent treated this idea *du haut de sa grandeur.*

What! the sovereign who owed him (M. de Talleyrand) his throne; who was at once indolent and ambitious; who knew nothing of the country in which he was to appear, a country in which he had no partisans who could guide

'Messieurs,' dit-il, 'j'ai pris connaissance de l'acte constitutionnel qui rappelle au trône de France le Roi, mon auguste frère. Je n'ai point reçu de lui le pouvoir d'accepter la Constitution, mais je connais ses sentiments et ses principes, et je ne crains pas d'être désavoué en assurant en son nom qu'il en admettra les bases.'

"Après cet engagement explicite, la déclaration énumérait les bases elles-mêmes, c'est-à-dire la division des pouvoirs, le partage du gouvernement entre le Roi et les Chambres, la responsabilité des ministres, le vote de l'impôt par la nation, la liberté de la presse, la liberté individuelle, la liberté des cultes, l'inamovibilité des juges, le maintien de la dette publique, des ventes, dites nationales, de la Légion d'Honneur, des grades et dotations de l'armée, l'oubli des votes et actes antérieurs, etc. 'J'espère ajouta le Prince, que l'énumération de ces conditions vous suffit, et comprend toutes les garanties qui peuvent assurer la liberté et le repos de la France.'"

him by their counsels or aid him by their influence, and in which were still the sovereigns with whom M. de Talleyrand had been the confederate—would decline to receive a man of the first respectability and the highest birth, universally beloved, because he had taken the same part that M. de Talleyrand himself had taken in the public affairs of former times, and this when the new sovereignty was to be founded on all parties and opinions, and have, moreover, a constitution for its basis; the thing was impossible. M. de Talleyrand replied to the person who gave him this warning—

"The King, you say, will look back on the past, but Nature has placed the eyes of men in the front of their heads, in order that they may look forward."

Undoubtedly, the warning referred to seemed absurd, but it was correctly given. M. de Liancourt saw "the certain M. de Blacas," but came back without having seen Louis XVIII.*

* Page 121.—"'Je sais tout cela mieux que vous,' répondit M. de Talleyrand, 'mais il ne faut pas qu'il en reste de trace dans l'esprit du roi, et c'est pour que l'oubli soit patent que j'ai choisi le duc de Liancourt; c'est l'homme du pays; il y fait du bien à tout le monde, il est placé pour en faire au roi, et je vous proteste qu'il sera bien reçu. Ce qui est passé est passé: la nature n'a pas donné aux hommes d'yeux par derrière, c'est de ce qui est devant qu'il faut s'occuper, et il nous restera encore assez à faire. Mais cependant, si M. de Liancourt trouvait de la difficulté à approcher du Roi? Car on s'accorde à dire qu'il est sous le joug d'un M. de Blacas qui ne laisse aborder que ceux qui lui conviennent. Qu'est-ce que ce Blacas? Je ne sais pas d'où il vient et me soucie assez peu de la savoir. Nous allons entrer dans un régime constitutionnel où le crédit se mesurera sur la capacité. C'est par la tribune et par les affaires que les hommes prendront désormais leur place, et se chargera qui voudra d'épier le moment du lever et de vider les poches du roi à son coucher.'

"M. de Liancourt était en effet parti, et partageant l'illusion de M. de Talleyrand il croyait aller reprendre sans difficulté auprès du roi l'exercice de son ancienne charge de maître de la garderobe. Tous deux avaient notablement compté sans leur hôte. M. de Liancourt ne vit point le roi, mais seulement M. de Blacas, qui le congédia avec la politesse froide qui ne lui manque jamais. Le hasard me fit rencontrer M. de Liancourt au retour, et avant qu'il eût pu voir M. de Talleyrand, je lui demandai comment il avait été reçu. Il me répondit: 'Mal, très-mal, ou, pour mieux dire, pas du tout. Il

In sending the particular person he had selected to Louis XVIII., M. de Talleyrand had the idea of engaging the King at once with the party to which that person belonged, viz., the moderate men of the early Revolution: men who were, by opinion, in favour of constitutional monarchy, but who had been so mixed up with persons of all parties and opinions, as to know all and have friends amongst all. In such a party he saw a centre at which divergent lines might meet—a backbone, to which might be attached the scattered members of the great and varied society out of which a new government had to be constructed. The project was not a bad one, and it is probable that during the first days of an uncertain triumph it would have succeeded.

But the unexpected popularity of his family, the general acceptance of the "white cockade," the reports of his brother and the ardent Royalists, which did not fail to reach him with suitable exaggerations, and the positive abdication of Napoleon, created a new phase in Louis's affairs, and hesitating what to do, he determined on doing nothing till he arrived in France.

This was sufficient to show M. de Talleyrand, who did not subsequently forget M. de Blacas, that there would be a court circle in the new reign from which he should be excluded; that the King neither meant to confide in him nor to offend him; that a system was not to be formed; that if he did not break with the sovereign on whose head he had a few days previously placed a crown, he must compromise with that sovereign's prejudices and favourites. There were not as yet sufficient motives for a rupture. Circumstances would shortly develop themselves, and give many opportunities for a decided course.

y a là un certain M. de Blacas qui garde les avenues et vous croyez bien que je ne me suis pas abaissé à lutter contre; au reste, je crains fort que M. de Talleyrand n'ait donné dans un piège: les princes vont nous revenir les mêmes que lorsqu'ils nous ont quittés.'

"Le roi nous fut bientôt annoncé; les affaires se pressaient les unes sur les autres de telle sorte qu'à peine l'insuccès de M. de Liancourt put effleurer l'attention. Il fallait, toutefois, qu'il eût donné beaucoup à penser à M. de Talleyrand, car il n'en parlait à personne."

In the meantime a policy of principle was to be sacrificed to a policy of dexterity.

Had he been consulted, he would certainly not have counselled Louis XVIII., who made a sort of triumphal entry into London on the 20th, to have said he owed his crown to the Prince Regent; putting aside the Emperor Alexander, who was still in Paris, and the Senate and the Assembly, which were the only constituted organs at that time of the nation's wishes, and the only authority which the French army and the French people would so easily have obeyed. But he met his Majesty at Compiègne, where Louis had determined to stay three or four days before entering Paris and fixing his ultimate resolves. The meeting would have been curious to witness.

Both personages were perfect actors in their way, and each with a pretension to superiority, was determined not to be subalternised by the other. Louis had acted the part of king for some years with the more care and punctiliousness because he was only king in name. Talleyrand had been accustomed from his youth to the highest positions in society; in later years he had been admitted into the intimacy of sovereigns, and been treated by them, if not on a footing of equality, with the highest respect; and he had just disposed of the fortunes of France. The descendant of kings meant to impose the sovereign on his powerful subject at once, with the airs of royalty, for which he was famous. The bishop, noble, and diplomatist was prepared to encounter these airs with the respectful well-bred nonchalance of a man of the world, who knew his own value; and the natural but not obsequious deference of a great minister to a constitutional monarch. It is probable that neither said what he intended to say, or what contemporaries have said for them; but it is reported that Louis gave M. de Talleyrand to understand that, in remaining tranquil and contented until Providence had placed the crown on his head, he had played the proper part of the prince and the philosopher, acting with far more dignity and wisdom than the bustling men of action who had been occupied during this time with their own advancement.

On the other hand, when his Majesty, wishing perhaps to efface the impression of observations that were not altogether complimentary, spoke in admiration of M. de Talleyrand's abilities, and asked him how he had contrived, first to overturn the Directory, and finally Bonaparte, M. de Talleyrand has the credit of having replied with a sort of naïveté which, when it suited him, he could well assume :

"Really, sire, I have done nothing for this : there is something inexplicable about me which brings ill luck on the governments that neglect me."*

Finally, as to essentials, the King appears, without entering much into details, to have given M. de Talleyrand to understand that France would have a constitution, and M. de Talleyrand the administration of foreign affairs.

This was all that M. de Talleyrand now expected.

Nevertheless he tried, on a subsequent occasion, to persuade the legitimate monarch that his throne would acquire increased solidity by being accepted as the spontaneous gift of the nation.

A really great man in Louis's place would probably have provoked a vote by universal suffrage ; the mere fact of appealing to such a vote would have attained a universal assent, springing from a universal enthusiasm ; and, in fact, such a vote for a king who had legitimacy in his favour would at the same time have renewed the vigour of the legitimist principle.

A very prudent man would not have run this risk ; he would have made the most of the vote of the Senate, since it was given, and taken for granted that it was a vote in favour of his race as well as of himself.

A vain and proud man, however, could not so easily divest himself of a peculiar quality which only he possessed. Any man might be chosen king of the French, but Louis XVIII. alone could be the legitimate King of France. This hereditary right to the throne was a personal property. He had claimed it in exile : he was resolved to

* "Mon Dieu, sire, je n'ai rien fait pour cela. C'est quelque chose d'inexplicable que j'ai en moi et qui porte malheur aux gouvernements qui me négligent."

assert it in power, and when M. de Talleyrand was for continuing the argument, he cut him short, according to contemporaneous authorities, by observing with a courteous but somewhat cynical smile :

" You wish me to accept a constitution from you, and you don't wish to accept a constitution from me. This is very natural ; mais, mon cher M. de Talleyrand, alors moi je serai debout, et vous assis."*

V.

The observation just quoted admitted of no reply. Still Louis had the good sense to see that he could not enter Paris without some explanations, and the promise, more or less explicitly given, of a representative government. Unlike the Comte d'Artois, he felt no sort of difficulty about giving this promise, and was even willing to concert with his minister as to the most popular manner in which he could give the guarantees he intended to offer without abandoning the point on which he resolved to insist.

The first thing, however, to provide for, was a meeting between the sovereign who had taken the crown as a right, and the Senate who had offered it on conditions.

This meeting took place on the 1st of May, at Saint-Ouen, a small village near Paris, where the King invited the Senate to meet him. M. de Talleyrand, on presenting this body, pronounced a speech, composed with much art, and spoke for both parties. He said that the nation, enlightened by experience, rushed forward to salute the sovereign returning to the throne of his ancestors ; that the Senate, participating in the sentiments of the nation, did the same ; that, on the other hand, the monarch, guided by his wisdom, was about to give France institutions in conformity with its intelligence, and the ideas of the epoch : that a constitutional " Charter " (a title the King had selected) would unite every interest to that of the throne, and fortify the royal will by the concurrence of all wills ; that no one knew better than his Majesty the value of institutions for a long time tried happily by a

* " But then, my dear M. de Talleyrand, I should be standing, and you seated."

neighbouring people, and furnishing aid and not opposition to all kings who loved the laws, and were the fathers of their people.

A few words from the King, confirming what M. de Talleyrand had said, left nothing to be desired; and on the 3rd of May was published the famous declaration of Saint-Ouen, which, after stating that much that was good in the constitution proposed by the Senate on the 6th of April would be preserved, added that some articles in it bore signs, notwithstanding, of the haste with which they had necessarily been written, and must consequently be reformed; but that his Majesty had the full intention to give to France a constitution that should contain all the liberties that Frenchmen could desire, and that the project of such a constitution would ere long be presented to the chambers.

Louis XVIII., thus preceded, entered Paris amidst a tolerable degree of enthusiasm, and, seating himself in the palace of his ancestors, began to prepare his existence there.

His first thought was to reconstitute his household, and, in doing this, M. de Talleyrand-Périgord was named grand aumonier. The new ministry was next to be formed, and M. de Talleyrand figured as minister of foreign affairs; and was honoured with the title of prince, though he could no longer add to it—of Benevent.

The other persons named in the new ministry, and who afterwards attracted notice, were the Abbé de Montesquieu, minister of the interior, a gentleman of learning and talent, but wholly unused to affairs, and a Royalist as much from prejudice as from principle (M. Guizot, by the way, commenced his career under M. de Montesquieu); and the Abbé Louis, minister of finance, whose financial abilities were universally acknowledged.

But the most important minister for the moment was the minister of the household, "that certain M. de Blacas," of whose influence over Louis XVIII. M. de Talleyrand had been early informed.

M. de Blacas was one of those gentlemen of the second order of nobility, who often produce on the vulgar a stronger effect as a grand seigneur than nobles of the first

class, because they add a little acting to the natural dignity usually attendant upon persons who have been treated from their infancy with distinction. He was middle-aged, good-looking, courteous, a good scholar, a great collector of medals, very vain of his court favour, which was based on his long knowledge of all the moral and physical weaknesses of his master, and with an entire confidence in the indestructibility of an edifice which he had seen, notwithstanding, raised on the ruins of its own foundation.

He had, also, such a confidence in his own capacity that he conceived it impossible for any one but an egregious fool, or a malignant personal enemy, to doubt it.

He concentrated in his hands the King's resolutions on all affairs, except foreign affairs, which M. de Talleyrand managed directly with his Majesty.

A government was thus formed, and the first duty of that government was to make a treaty of peace with the victorious powers. M. de Talleyrand had, necessarily, the conduct of this negotiation. There were two questions at issue: the one, the arrangements between the European potentates who had to give possessors to the territories they had taken from France; and the other, the arrangements to be made between France and these potentates.

Some persons thought it would be possible to deal with the two questions together, and that France could be admitted into a congress where the special questions of France with Europe, and the questions that had to be decided by the European sovereigns between themselves, could be settled simultaneously.*

But a little consideration will, I think, show that the questions between France and Europe, and the questions between the different States of Europe, which had been in hostility with France, were perfectly distinct.

It would also have been absurd, and consequently impossible, for France to have exacted, that all the matters that had to be arranged as resulting from the late war with France, should be treated in France.

* M. Thiers is of this opinion.

The capital of France was the proper place for treating as to French interests.

The capital of one of the allies was the place where the affairs between the allies were naturally to be discussed. Paris was chosen in the first case, Vienna in the second.

The allies, however, had undoubtedly placed themselves in a false position towards the French nation, and this was felt when a peace with it had to be concluded.

They had declared that they separated Napoleon from France, that they only made war against the French ruler, and that they would give the country better conditions than they would give the Emperor. M. de Talleyrand, therefore, came forward, saying, "Well, you were going to give Napoleon the old limits of the French monarchy, what will you give France?"

The allies replied, as it was certain they would reply, that the promises alluded to were vague, they could not dispose of the property of others; that France had nothing legitimate but that which she held before a predatory succession of conquests; that the allies held, it was true, the conquered territories recovered from the French, but that they could not give them back to wrongful acquirers; that the general understanding was, that France should have its ancient limits, and that when the allies had agreed on the 23rd of April to withdraw their troops from the French territory, it had been understood that this was the territory of ancient France. Anything more was out of the question. M. de Talleyrand, however, obtained the frontier of 1792, and not that of 1790, and in rounding that frontier, added some fortresses and inhabitants to the kingdom of Louis XVI. Moreover, Paris remained the mistress, and was permitted to boast of remaining the mistress, of all the works of art ravished from other nations, being thus, in fact, constituted the artistic capital of the world.

Such a limited result, however, did not satisfy the French people with peace when the horrors of war were over; and we find in various works concerning these times comments on the inconceivable *légèreté* of M. de Talleyrand, in not procuring more advantageous conditions.

I confess that I think that Europe should never have made compromising promises; and that she should have fulfilled generously whatever promises she had made; but upon the whole France, which in her conquests had despoiled every power, ought to have been satisfied when, in the returning tide of victory, those powers left her what she had originally possessed.

Poor M. de Talleyrand! he carried off all the absurd reproaches he had to encounter with a dignified indifference: even the accusation which was now made against him, of having signed the treaty of April, in which the provisional government, not being able to hold the fortresses still occupied by French troops out of France, with a foreign army demanding them in the heart of Paris, resigned them on the condition that France itself should be evacuated. "You seem to have been in a great hurry, M. de Talleyrand," said the Duc de Berry, "to sign that unhappy treaty." "Alas, yes, monseigneur; I was in a great hurry. There are senators who say I was in a great hurry to get the crown offered to your Royal house; a crown which it might otherwise not have got. You observe, monseigneur, that I was in a great hurry to give up fortresses which we could not possibly have kept. Alas, yes, monseigneur, I was in a great hurry. But do you know, monseigneur, what would have happened if I had waited to propose Louis XVIII. to the allies, and had refused to sign the treaty of the 23rd of April with them? No; you don't know what would have happened! No more do I. But at all events you may rest assured, we should not now be disputing as to an act of the prince, your father."

Again, when a little after this the son of Charles X. was boasting of what France would do when she got the three hundred thousand troops that had been locked up in Germany, Talleyrand, who had been seated at some little distance and apparently not listening, got up, and approaching slowly the Duc de Berry, said, with half-shut eyes and a doubtful look of inquiry, "And do you really think, monseigneur, that these three hundred thousand men can be of any use to us?" "Of use to us! to be sure they

will." "Hem!" said M. de Talleyrand, *fixing* the Duc, "you really think so, monseigneur? I did not know; for we shall get them from that unfortunate treaty of the 23rd of April!"

The best of it was that Charles X. had thought this treaty the great act of his life, until his son said it was a great mistake; and he did not know then whether he should defend it in his own glorification, or throw all the blame of it on M. de Talleyrand.

VI.

The next link in the chain of events,—a final treaty of peace between France and Europe having been concluded (on the 30th of May),—was the promulgation of the long-promised constitution; for the sovereigns who were still in Paris, and with whom the Restoration had commenced, were anxious to leave it; and they said that they could not do so until the promises they had made to the French nation were fulfilled.

The 4th of June, therefore, was fixed for this national act.

The King had promised, as it has been seen, that the frame of a constitution should be submitted to the Senate and the legislative body.

He appointed the Abbé Montesquieu, whom we have already named, and a M. Ferrand, a person of some consideration with the Royalist party, to sketch the outline of this great work, assisted by M. de Beugnot, an accomplished gentleman, not very particular in his principles, but very adroit in his phraseology; when done, such sketch was submitted to and approved by the King, and passed on to two commissions, one chosen from the Senate and the other from the legislative body, the king reserving to himself the right of settling disputed points.

The result was generally satisfactory, for though the constitution was so framed as to give it the air of being a grant from the royal authority, it contained the most essential principles of a representative government, namely:—

Equality before the law, and in the distribution of

taxation,—the admissibility of all to public employments,—the inviolability of the monarch,—the responsibility of ministers,—the freedom of religion,—the necessity of annual budgets;—and, finally, the permission to express in print and by publication all opinions—such permission being controlled by laws, which were to repress or punish its abuse.

There was to be a lower chamber with the qualification for the electors of the payment of three hundred francs, direct taxes; and, for the eligible, of one thousand francs.

The upper chamber was not then made hereditary, though the King might give an hereditary peerage. A great portion of the Senate, the dukes and peers before the Revolution, and other persons of distinction, formed the house of peers. The legislative body was to act as the lower chamber until the time for which the members had been chosen was expired. The senators, not carried on into the peerage, were given as a pension the payment that formerly attached to their function.

The King bargained that the new constitution should be called "La Charte Constitutionnelle;" "Charte" being an old word that the kings had formerly employed, and that it should be dated in *the nineteenth* year of his reign.

The preamble also stated that "the King, in entire possession of his full rights over this beautiful kingdom, only desires to exercise the authority he holds from God and his ancestors, in determining the bounds of his own power." A phrase which somewhat resembles one of Bolingbroke's, who says: "The infinite power of God is limited by His infinite wisdom."

It cannot be affirmed that M. de Talleyrand had anything to do with the framing of "the Charter," since Louis XVIII.'s instruction to the commissioners was to keep everything secret from M. de Talleyrand; but it was the sort of constitution he had insisted upon: and thus the Restoration was accomplished according to the plan which he had undertaken to give to it, when he obtained the decrees which deposed the Bonapartes and recalled the Bourbons.

VII.

I have said that when M. de Talleyrand created the government of Louis XVIII., he wanted to give it a backbone, consisting of a party of able, practical, and popular men of moderate opinions. But Louis XVIII., as a principle, distrusted all men in proportion to their popularity and ability, his ministers especially. M. de Talleyrand, therefore, was, in his eyes, a person who should be constantly watched, and constantly suspected. Louis XVIII. had also in horror the idea of his cabinet being a ministry, *i.e.*, a compact body agreeing together. His notion as to driving was that horses who were always kicking at each other, were less likely to kick at the carriage; furthermore, he considered that everything which was not as it had been thirty years back was really wrong, though he did not mean to take the trouble of changing it, and that all this new set of persons he had to deal with were *coquins*—not a gentleman amongst them. That it was proper manners, since they existed, to treat them courteously, and proper policy, since they had a certain power in their hands, to temporise with them; but in his heart of hearts he looked upon them as yahoos, who had got into the stalls of horses, and were to be kicked out directly the horses, strengthened by plentiful feeds of corn, were up to the enterprise. In the meantime nothing was to be risked, so that he sat himself down as comfortably as he could in his arm-chair, received all visitors with an air which an actor, about to play Louis XIV., might have done well to study; wrote pretty billets, said sharp and acute things, and felt that he was every inch—a king.

Such was the sovereign of France; but there was also another demi-sovereign, who was to be found in the Pavillon Marsan, inhabited by the Comte d'Artois.

I esteem that prince, whom it has been the fashion to decry, more in some respects than I do his brother; for though he had not a superior intelligence, he had a heart. He really wished well to his country: he would have laid down his life for it, at least he thought he would:

his intentions were excellent; but he relied on his old notions and education for the means of carrying them out.

Louis XVIII. was more cultivated, more cynical, more false: he loved France vaguely, as connected with his own pride and the pride of his race: he thought ill of the world, but was disposed to extract the most he could from it towards his own comfort, dignity, and prosperity. This character was not amiable, but its coldness and hardness rendered its possessor more secure against being duped, though not against being flattered.

The Comte d'Artois was both flattered and duped; but it was by addressing themselves to his better qualities that his flatterers duped him. They depicted the French people as eminently and naturally loyal: full of sympathy and respect for the descendants of Henry IV. and Louis XIV. "Poor children! they had been led away by having bad men placed over them in the different functions of the State: all that was necessary was to place good men, loyal men, men who had served the royal family even in exile—men, in short, who could be relied upon, in the public employments. The church, too—that great instrument of government, and that great source of comfort and contentment to men—that guardian of the mind which prevents its emotions from wandering into the regions of false theories and hopes—had been treated with contempt and indifference. The church and the throne were required to aid each other—the Bourbons had to bring them into harmony. On these conditions, and on these conditions alone—conditions (so said all whom the Comte d'Artois consulted) so clear, so simple, so pious, and so just—the safety and prosperity of the monarchy depended."

The whole mistake consisted in considering the French a people that they were not, and ignoring what they were, and in fancying that a few prefects and priests could suddenly convert a whole generation from one set of ideas to another. But the Comte d'Artois' doctrines were pleasing to Louis XVIII., though he did not quite believe in them, and still more pleasing to all the friends or favourites who enjoyed his intimacy.

Thus, though they had not the support of his convic-

tions, they influenced his conduct; which, however, never being altogether what Monsieur and his party required, was always watched by them with suspicion, and frequently opposed with obstinacy.

Where, then, could M. de Talleyrand turn for aid to maintain the government at the head of which he figured? To the King? he had not his confidence. To his colleagues? they did not confide in each other. To the Comte d'Artois? he was in opposition to his brother. To the Royalists? they wanted absolute possession of power. The Imperalists and Republicans were out of the question. Moreover, he was not a man who could create, stimulate, command. To understand a situation and to bring to bear not unwilling assistants on its immediate solution, to collect the scattered influences about him, and direct them to a point at which it was their own interest to arrive; this was his peculiar talent. But to sustain a long and protracted conflict, to overawe and govern opposing parties; this was beyond the colder temperament of his faculties.

His only parliamentary effort then was an exposition in the chamber of peers of the state of the finances, which exposition was as clear and able as his financial statements always were. For the rest, he trusted partly to chance, partly to the ordinary and natural workings of a constitutional system, which was sure in time to produce parties with opinions, and even ministers, who, in their common defence, would be obliged to adopt a common policy and line of conduct. Thus, shrugging up his shoulders at M. de Fontanes' declaration that he could not feel free where the press was so, and smiling at Madame de Simiane's notions as to a minister, who, according to her and the ladies of the Faubourg St. Germain, should be a grand seigneur, with perfect manners and a great name, who had hard-working men with spectacles under them, called *bouleux*,* to do their business—he hastened his prepara-

* "Madame de Simiane reprit: 'Il ne s'agit pas de cela; c'était bon du temps de Bonaparte; aujourd'hui il faut mettre dans les ministères des gens de qualité et qui ont à leurs ordres des bons travailleurs qui font les affaires, ce qu'on appele des *bouleux*.'"—*Mémoires de Beugnot*, p. 142.

tions for joining the congress at Vienna, which was to have commenced its sittings two months after the treaty of Paris, that is, on the 30th of July, but which had not met in the middle of September.

VIII.

I have said that the congress was to commence on the 30th of July, but it was not till the 25th of September that the Emperor of Russia, the King of Prussia, and the other kings and ministers of the different courts who were expected there, began to assemble. M. de Metternich, Lord Castlereagh, afterwards succeeded by the Duke of Wellington, the Prince Hardenberg, the Count Nesselrode, though only as second to the Emperor Alexander himself, who was his own negotiator, were the principal persons with whom M. de Talleyrand was associated.

His task was not an easy one. His sovereign owed his crown to those whose interests had now to be decided; he might himself be considered under obligations to them. It required a strong sense of a high position not to sink into a subordinate one. M. de Talleyrand had this, and sat himself down at Vienna with the air of being the ambassador of the greatest king in the world.

He was accompanied by persons with names more or less distinguished. The Duc Dalberg, the Comte Alexis de Noailles, M. de la Bernadière, and M. de Latour du Pin.

The first, M. de Talleyrand said, would let out secrets which he wished to be known; the second would report all he saw to the Comte d'Artois, and thus save that prince the trouble of having any one else to do so. As to M. de la Bernadière, he would keep the Chancellerie going, and M. de Latour du Pin would sign the passports.

The ideas he himself took under these circumstances to Vienna were,—to get France admitted into the congress on the same footing as other powers; to break up in some way or other the compactness of the confederation recently formed against her, and to procure friends from the body which was now a united enemy; to procure the expulsion of Murat from the throne of Naples, and lastly, to remove

the Emperor of Elba to a more distant location (Bermuda, or the Azores, were spoken of).

The dissolution of the alliance was the independence of France, however brought about. As for the expulsion of Murat from Naples, or the removal of Napoleon from Elba, these, no doubt, were great objects to the Bourbons in France; but it is possible that there were other grounds also which induced M. de Talleyrand to pursue them.

If Murat were removed from Naples, and Napoleon were in some place of security, and the elder branch of the Bourbons compromised itself in France, two other governments, according to circumstances, were still on the cards. The regency with Napoleon's son, or a limited monarchy with the Duc d'Orléans.

M. de Talleyrand had seen enough before he went to Vienna, and probably heard enough since he had been there, to make him doubtful of the success of his first experiment: but his position was such that in any combination in France that had not the late Emperor Napoleon at its head, he would still be the person to whom a large party in and out of his own country would look for the solution of the difficulty which the downfall of Louis XVIII. would provoke.

The basis of the congress of Vienna was necessarily that furnished by the engagements which had already taken place between the allies at Breslau, Töplitz, Chaumont, and Paris; engagements which concerned the reconstruction of Prussia according to its proportions in 1806, the dissolution of the Confederation of the Rhine; the re-establishment of the House of Brunswick in Hanover; and arrangements, to which I shall presently allude, concerning the future position of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw.

As all that was to be distributed was a common spoil in the hands of the allies, they suggested that a committee of four, representing England, Austria, Prussia, and Russia, should first agree amongst themselves as to the partition; and that an understanding having been established between these—the principal parties—this under-

standing should be communicated to the others; to France and Spain in particular;—whose objections would be heard.

Such an arrangement excluded France from any active part in the first decisions, which would evidently be sustained when the four allies had agreed upon them.

The tact and talent of M. de Talleyrand were displayed in getting this sentence reversed.

Taking advantage of the treaty of peace which France had already signed, he contended that there were no longer *allies*, but simply powers who were called upon, after a war which had created a new order of things in Europe, to consider and decide in what manner this new order of things could best be established for the common good, and with the best regard to the old rights existing before 1792, and the new rights which certain states had legitimately acquired in the long struggle which, with more or less continuity, had existed since that epoch.

With some difficulty he at last made these ideas prevail, and the committee of four was changed into a committee of eight, comprising all the signataries to the treaty of Paris: Austria, England, Russia, Prussia, France, Spain, Portugal, and Sweden.

This first point gained, the second,—viz., a division amongst the allies, was to be brought about. Any precipitate effort to do this would have prevented its success. M. de Talleyrand waited to work for it himself until rival interests began to work with him.

Now Austria's great pre-occupation was to regain her old position in Italy, without diminishing the importance of that to which she pretended in Germany.

The views of Russia, or rather of the Emperor Alexander, were more complicated, and formed with a certain greatness of mind and generosity of sentiment, though always with that craft which mingled with the imperial chivalry.

I have just said that I should speak of the arrangements respecting the Duchy of Warsaw, which were contemplated during the war in the event of the allies being successful. It had been settled that this duchy—once

delivered from the pretensions of Napoleon—should be divided between the three military powers, Austria, Prussia, and Russia.

But the Emperor of Russia now took a higher tone. The annihilation of Poland, he said, had been a disgrace to Europe: he proposed to himself the task of collecting its scattered members, and reconstituting it with its own laws, religion, and constitution. It would be a pleasure to him to add to what he could otherwise re-assemble, the ancient Polish provinces under his dominion. Poland should live again with the Czar of Russia for its king. I doubt whether the Emperor Alexander did not overrate the gratitude he expected to awaken, and underrate the feeling existing among the Poles, not merely as to nationality, but as to national independence.

But his notion most assuredly was, that he should thus create as an *avant-garde* into Europe a powerful kingdom, capable of rapid improvement, and combining with a complete devotion to his family, all the enthusiasm of a people who again stood up amidst the nations of the world.

He argued, moreover, and not without reason, that a kingdom of Poland thus existing would inevitably ere long draw back to itself all those portions of alienated territory which were in the hands of the other co-partitioning powers, and that thus Russia would ere long dominate the whole of that kingdom which she had at one time condescended to divide.

This project was of course easily seen through in Prussia as well as in Austria; but Russia presumed that Austria would be satisfied with her Italian acquisitions. He saw, however, that Prussia required no common bribe. The bribe proposed was Saxony, and thus a secret engagement was entered into between the two northern courts: Russia promising to stand by Prussia's claims as to Saxony, and Prussia promising to support Russia's plans as to Poland.

With respect to England, she seemed more especially occupied with the idea of forming a united kingdom of Holland and Belgium, and beguiled by the delusion that you could unite by treaties populations which were dis-

united by sympathies, fancied she could, by the union proposed, create a barrier against French ambition where England was most concerned; and thus save us in future from those dangers by which we were menaced when the Scheldt was in Napoleon's possession, and the British coast was menaced by maritime arsenals, which confronted it from Brest to Antwerp.

The conflict which at once commenced had reference to the ambitious claims of Prussia and Russia.

The King of Saxony, though an ally of Napoleon, had been faithful to France, and there was a feeling in the French nation favourable to him. As to Poland, France, which has always taken a lively interest in Polish independence as a barrier against Russian aggrandisement, could not see with satisfaction an arrangement which was to make Poland an instrument of Russian power.

Our disposition as to Prussia was at first somewhat undecided. We did not approve of the destruction of Saxony, still we were not unwilling to see a strong state established in the north of Germany, if it was an independent state: and would therefore at first have allowed the addition of Saxony to the Prussian dominions, if Prussia would have joined with Great Britain and Austria against the Russian projects in Poland. Austria, on the other hand, was quite as much against the Prussian project as the Russian one; but Prince Metternich, being perfectly aware that Prussia would not separate herself from Russia, affected to fall into Lord Castlereagh's views, and agreed to sacrifice Saxony if Prussia would insist with ourselves on Polish independence.

Prussia, as Prince Metternich foresaw, refused this; and indeed took possession of Saxony, as Russia did of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw, assuming towards the other powers an attitude of defiance.

In the meantime the question of Saxony became popular with the English parliament and the English court: with the English parliament, which is always against the oppressor; and with the English court, which began to think that, when Prussia had once got Saxony, she might take a fancy to Hanover. Austria gladly perceived this

change, and it was agreed that England and Austria should oppose themselves conjointly and distinctly to the intentions haughtily manifested by the two northern courts.

Thus England, Austria, and France found themselves linked together by common opinions. Still there were reasons why the first two powers hesitated as to connecting themselves with the third.

These reasons were—the connection which M. de Talleyrand desired, would be a rupture of that league by which the peace of Europe had been obtained; it was uncertain whether France could give Austria and England any practical aid; and also it was doubtful whether she would not exact more for such aid, if she did give it, than it was worth, and aim at renewing all the ambitious designs which the overthrow of Napoleon and the treaty of Paris had set at rest.

The principal objection wore away as it became more and more evident that Prussia and Russia had already entered into separate and particular engagements, which rendered it not only justifiable but necessary for England and Austria, if they did not mean to submit servilely to the results of these engagements, to guard against them by counter-engagements between themselves.

With respect to the power of France as an auxiliary, M. de Talleyrand, by an able exposition of the state of affairs at Vienna, induced the French government to display its military capacity by raising the French army from 130,000 to 200,000, and creating the facility for increasing it to a far more formidable amount—a measure which the extraordinary recovery of French finances under the able administration of M. Louis rendered easy, and which produced a considerable moral effect, both in France and out of it. At the same time the ambassador of France, in his numerous conversations with Lord Castlereagh and M. de Metternich, held this language:

"A government to last must be faithful to its origin. Bonaparte's was founded by conquest: he was forced to continue conquering; that of the present sovereign of France is based on principle. To this principle it must

adhere; it is the principle of legitimate right, which conquest, until confirmed by treaty, cannot effect. We support the King of Saxony on this principle: we do not want then to be paid for doing so. In supporting his throne, we guarantee our own. Do you doubt my sincerity? I will sign any paper you wish to tranquillize all suspicion as to our ambition."

It was in this manner that he led by degrees to the signing of the secret treaty of 3rd of January, 1815, a treaty by which Austria, England, and France bound themselves to furnish each 150,000 men, to support any one of the three powers which might be attacked by other powers attempting forcibly to alter the equilibrium of Europe for their own advantage. The names of the powers suspected were not mentioned, and the compact entered into was essentially of a defensive character; but it was in sympathy with French feelings; it broke up the anti-French alliance, and gave to France the two most important allies she could hope to gain; for England alone had formed the late coalition, and without her a coalition could not be again formed.

M. Thiers, who is too prone to consider that all statesmanship consists in acquiring extensions of territory, objects to everything done by M. de Talleyrand, and considers that this diplomatist should have waited quietly, rather favouring Prussia and Russia, and that then these powers would have offered France Belgium or the frontiers of the Rhine, in which case Prussia and Russia would, he considers, have been more advantageous allies to France than England and Austria.

Now, of all ideas the one that seems the most extravagant to me is that Prussia, or even Russia, would have reseated France on the Rhine, or brought her back in any way nearer to Germany. I feel certain that under no circumstances was this likely. But, at all events, Prussia and Russia would only have made the strange proposal on which M. Thiers counts, at the last extremity.

They would have previously carried their negotiations with their late allies to the utmost limit; and as we were prepared to make many concessions, and did indeed finally

give up one-third of Saxony to Prussia, and as much of Poland as she could well digest to Russia, there is not the slightest probability that, for the remaining differences, Prussia and Russia would have purchased the aid of France by a large increase of frontier and a deadly quarrel with Great Britain and Austria.

M. de Talleyrand then, in following the policy suggested by M. Thiers, would, in the first place, have lost the opportunity which he more wisely seized of separating the great powers; he would also have ungenerously abandoned Saxony, and at the same time so disgusted England, that it would afterwards have been impossible to get an English parliament to vote a sixpence for sustaining the Bourbon cause. Waterloo would never have been fought; Russia and Prussia could have done little without English subsidies; and France would have been again delivered into the hands of Napoleon, whose triumph would have been M. de Talleyrand's own ruin; and the ruin of the master he then served.

As it is not my intention to enter into the general subject of the treaty of Vienna, which I have always considered alike defective in principle and policy, I shall not follow the negotiations I have been alluding to further; though it may be as well, since I have spoken of Naples, to observe that M. de Talleyrand never obtained Prince Metternich's attention to the dethronement of Murat until the Prussian and Russian questions had been settled by suitable arrangements; for Prince Metternich was too wise to have Germany and Italy on his back at once; when, however, these arrangements were completed, and the brother-in-law of Napoleon had compromised himself by intrigues, which had been watched but allowed to ripen, the Austrian statesman then gave the French ambassador a private but positive assurance that the Kingdom of Naples should shortly be restored to its old possessors.

As to the question of a change of residence for Napoleon, that was decided, just as the congress was closing, by Napoleon himself; who, not ignorant of the plans that were maturing for his removal from a position wherein

nothing but the most absurd want of consideration could ever have placed him, engaged in that audacious enterprise, the most glorious, though the most fatal, in his meteor-like career.

IX.

It was in the midst of the gaieties of a ball on the 5th of March,* and just as the congress was about to separate, that from a small group of sovereigns collected together and betraying the seriousness of their conversation by the gloom of their countenances, there came forth as a sort of general murmur:—

"Bonaparte has escaped from Elba." Prince Metternich, it is said, was the only person who at once divined that the ex-Emperor's intentions were to march at once on Paris. The success of so bold an adventure was, of course, doubtful; but in the hope there might still be time to influence public opinion, a proclamation, proposed (at the instigation of the Duke of Wellington) by Austria, and signed 13th March by France and the four great powers, denounced the Emperor of Elba in language only applicable to a pirate or a freebooter: a language that Louis XVIII. had used at Paris on the 6th of March, and might use with some propriety, but which came far less decorously from princes who had not very long previously treated this pirate and freebooter as "the king of kings," and which was unsuitable to the lips of a sovereign who was speaking of the husband of his favourite daughter.

People, however, often cover a hesitation in their decisions by an extravagance in their attitude.

The idea of a new war was popular with no one; the different powers, moreover, represented at Vienna, were no longer on the same cordial terms of fraternity that had distinguished their relations at Paris; they felt notwithstanding, that, in the face of a common danger they must consider as extinguished their several rivalries and animosities, and show themselves united and determined on the deadly combat, which alone could, if successful,

* So many and such different accounts are given of the time and manner in which this news arrived, that I merely give the popular, without answering for its being the accurate one.

repair the effects of their imprudence and save the honour of their arms.

Shortly after this came the news of that glorious and soul-stirring march through legions who, when commanded to point their bayonets at the breast of their old commander as a traitor, wept at his knees as a father; but this great historical romance rather strengthened than weakened the resolves that had previously been formed; and the proclamation of the 13th of March was soon succeeded by the treaty of the 25th.

This treaty, to which the four allied powers were the only principal parties, was a revival of the treaty of Chaumont and the treaty of Paris. The position of the Bourbons was not clearly defined; for though Louis XVIII. was invited to be a party to it, the allies, and England in particular, expressly declared that they did not attempt to impose a government on France, nor bind themselves to support the claims of the fugitive monarch. I say "fugitive monarch" because Louis XVIII. had by this time tested the value of his adherents, and was settling down quietly at Ghent; Napoleon being as quietly re-established in the Tuileries.

The secret of all that had occurred is to be stated in a few words.

Louis XVIII. had not gained the affections of the French nation; his predecessor had retained the affections of the French army. There was little mystery in the intrigues of the Bonapartes. The Queen Hortense (Comtesse de St. Leu) resided at Paris, and the conversation of her drawing-room was a constant conspiracy whilst the correspondence she received was the confidence of half the capital. Barras and Fouché both informed M. de Blacas of much that was going on, and offered to give him more detailed information; but that gentleman's horizon was limited, and what he did not see he did not believe. Moreover, the Royalists conceived that the most Christian king had gained the consciences of the military by naming an *aumonier*, with the rank of captain, to each regiment, and had the provinces in his hands, because he had placed them in those of functionaries who professed hatred to "the usurper.'

"What had they to fear?" Thus, the country which had been fatigued with the soldier and the drum, was teased by the mass and the *émigré*. And, in the meantime, the veterans of the great army, who saw themselves replaced by a guard of young gentlemen with good names and splendid uniforms; and the beauties of the Empire, who found themselves out of fashion amongst the great ladies of the legitimate court, were at the two ends of the electric wire, which had only to be touched by the little man in the grey great-coat, in order to vibrate through the heart of every soldier who had ever followed the imperial eagle, and still kept the tricolour cockade in his writing-desk or his knapsack.

X.

The conduct of M. de Talleyrand at Vienna had been that which he always followed to any government that employed him—zealous and faithful. He had, in short, been an active and able agent, carrying out the policy which Louis XVIII., with whom he kept up a private correspondence, thought the best for his dynasty and for France; and he had succeeded in giving both dignity and influence to a government which in reality wanted both. He had not during his foreign mission meddled with the internal policy of the court, nor relaxed in his endeavours to serve it on account of the faults it committed: but to his intimate friends he had made no secret of his belief that it was taking a road which would probably lead to ruin. When it had arrived at that goal the case was different. He did not separate himself from it—but he did not link himself indissolubly with it. He showed no hesitation, however, as to declaring against its opponent. Concentrating himself indeed on the one idea of getting rid of Napoleon, he repeated constantly to those who expatiated on the deficiency of the Restoration, "I don't know what government may be the best for France, but I do know that Napoleon's is the worst."

His old master would willingly have softened this animosity; and Fouché, who was intriguing with all parties, with the intention of choosing the most powerful,

sent M. de Montrond to Vienna to learn what he could, as to the real intentions of the alliance, and more especially as to the intentions of M. de Talleyrand, whose services M. de Montrond was to endeavour, by any assurances he might judge necessary, to obtain.

This M. de Montrond was a specialty of his epoch: a type of that French *roué* whom Faublas, and more particularly the "*liaisons dangereuses*," had produced. He had ruled the world of fashion by his loves, his duels, and his wit, which was superior to any man's, for nearly forty years. He was one of M. de Talleyrand's pets, as M. de Talleyrand was one of his admirations. Each spoke ill of the other, for each said he loved the other for his vices. But no one could speak to M. de Talleyrand with so much intimacy as M. de Montrond, nor obtain from him so clear an answer. For they trusted each other, though M. de Montrond would never have told any one else to trust M. de Talleyrand, nor M. de Talleyrand told any one else to trust M. de Montrond.

This latter gentleman, the soul of Queen Hortense's circle, and at the same time the friend of the Duc d'Orléans, whom he had known in Sicily, to which island he had exiled himself in one of Napoleon's fits of ill-humour—not, as it was thought, without an object—first tried to see if any consideration could bring the diplomatist, once known as Prince de Benevent, to his old allegiance: and, on finding this impossible, sounded him, it is said, as to his feelings towards the son of that prince, with whose celebrated society in the Palais Royal his early remembrances must have been familiar. The answer he obtained was "that the door was not then open, but, should it ever be open, there was no necessity for shutting it with vehemence."

This lukewarm fidelity was not precisely of the temperature that suited the loyalty of Ghent, where some people thought that it would not have been difficult to have induced the allies to have been more positive and explicit in favour of the legitimate monarch, if his representative had been more zealous as to his rights and less sensible as to his errors. The party of the Comte d'Artois,

also, instead of repenting of the excess to which it had carried its principles, and recognizing that this excess had been the cause of its overthrow—thought, or at least *said*, as is usual in such cases, that its failure was caused, not by the policy it had pursued, but by the checks which that policy had encountered.

XI.

M. de Talleyrand, then, was more or less in disgrace with the politicians, who were already disputing about the redistribution of the places that their mistakes had just lost; and, bearing this disgrace with his usual supercilious negligence, declared that his health required the waters of Carlsbad, observing that a diplomatist's first duty after a congress was to take care of his liver.

In the meantime the hundred days which concentrated so much of the past, present, and future, were rushing rapidly on. I know no example that teaches us more clearly that our intellect is governed by our character, than that which is to be found in the conduct of Napoleon during these hundred days. None saw more clearly than himself that prudence and policy advised that he should either appear before the French as the great captain who came to free them from a yoke imposed by the foreigner; and refuse any other title than that of their general until a peace was established or a victory gained: or that he should seize the full powers of dictator, and sustain them by his prestige over the military and the masses, arming and revolutionizing France, and being himself the representative of that armed revolution. But he loved the title and decorations of sovereignty, and could not induce himself to descend from the emperor to the soldier. Neither could he persuade himself to call to life those elements of force in which he saw the elements of disorder, nor condescend to be the chief of the mob even with the title of majesty. He temporised, therefore, for the moment with those with whom he had the least sympathy, and from whom he could get the least assistance; I mean the Constitutionalists, who, representing the middle order and the thinking portion of the French people, formed a party,

that with a regular government, and at an ordinary time, and under a sovereign they could have trusted, might have possessed considerable influence, but such a party, with a government created by the sword, at the moment of a crisis, under a ruler of whom they were suspicious, could only embarrass Napoleon's action, and could not add to his authority.

The conditions, then, under which this marvellous being fought for the last time for empire were impossible. He had not in his character the elements of a revolutionary leader; and he was not allowed to use the qualities, with which nature had endowed him, of a great captain and despotic chief.

His cool head, his incomparable energy, gave something like character and system to his own military proceedings, but all beyond them was confusion. A great battle was to be safety or ruin. He fought it, and was vanquished; but he had fought it with skill and courage against foreign invaders; and I confess that my heart, though an English one, beats in sympathy for him, as he quitted the field where he left so many of his devoted followers, and, prescient of the fate which awaited him, sought a city which never tolerates the unfortunate. Would for England's honour that his destiny had closed on that memorable field, and that we had not to inscribe on the same page of our history the captivity of St. Helena and the victory of Waterloo!

XII.

To return to Ghent; the ex-King, irritated and perplexed by the prolonged absence of his minister, not satisfied with that of the Duc d'Orléans, who had retired to England, and harassed by the zeal of Monsieur, had conducted himself, notwithstanding, with dignity and ability; and, by a sort of representation about his person, a continued correspondence with France, and a confident attachment on the part of his adherents, kept up a certain prestige in his favour.

Nothing, however, had at first been positively decided concerning him, for M. de Metternich carried on, for a time, a secret negotiation with Fouché, in which he offered

—if that false and wily man could procure Napoleon's abdication or deposition—to support the claims of either the Duc d'Orléans or Marie-Louise: a proposition which, as long as its success was uncertain, could not but affect considerably the state of M. de Talleyrand's liver.

This negotiation once broken off, Louis' claims made a great advance, since the allied sovereigns were strongly persuaded that on entering France they must have some national party in their favour.

There were certain indications likewise in France itself, serving to show men who watched the inclination of the many straws that were then in the air, that these were being blown back towards the old monarchy; and when Louis XVIII. saw that the list of Bonaparte's senators did not contain the name of M. de Semonville, he considered his return pretty secure.

The same conviction arrived about the same time at Carlsbad, where the distinguished invalid began to think that he ought no longer to delay a personal account of the services he had rendered at Vienna.

His arrival at Ghent was not, however, particularly agreeable there, since he came as the decided enemy of the now celebrated M. de Blacas, to whom he was determined to attribute nearly all the errors which the King had committed.

In fact, M. de Talleyrand's disgrace was resolved upon; and, as he was rarely the last to know what concerned himself, when he waited on Louis XVIII. the day after the battle of Waterloo, it was to request his gracious permission to continue his cure at Carlsbad; nor was his Majesty so ill-natured as to reply otherwise than by saying: "Certainly, M. de Talleyrand; I hear those waters are excellent."

Nothing could equal the amiable and contented mien with which M. de Talleyrand limped from his most Christian Majesty's presence after this considerate reply; and, eating an excellent dinner that evening with the mayor of Mons, he was never known, says one of the guests, to be more gay, witty, or agreeable;—dilating to one or two of his intimate friends on the immense pleasure

it was to find that he had no longer to disturb himself about the affairs of a clique which it was impossible to serve and to please.

But, as it happened, the Comte d'Artois, who hated M. de Talleyrand as a liberal, hated M. de Blacas still more as a favourite; and Louis XVIII. finding that, whatever happened to M. de Talleyrand, M. de Blacas could not be kept, and that he (the king) must either be the tool of his brother, or obtain a protector in his minister, preferred, on the whole, the latter situation.

The Duke of Wellington, moreover, who, since the secret treaty at Vienna, considered the French negotiator there as linked with the policy of England, told Louis that if he wished for the influence of our government, he must have a man at the head of his own in whom he could confide.

M. Guizot, likewise, who, though young in affairs had acquired, even thus early, much consideration, and who spoke in the name of the constitutional Legitimists, had already said that, to have the support of this small but respectable party, a cabinet must be formed with M. de Talleyrand at its head; and thus, on those second thoughts which come to us often when we have been a little too hasty and bold in listening to our first, M. de Talleyrand received the order to join the King at Cambrai the day after he had been allowed to proceed to Carlsbad.

M. de Talleyrand was, however, not only mortified by the treatment he had received, but foresaw that he had only such treatment eventually to expect, and was determined to prefer the first recommendation to the subsequent command.

There are many, however, anxious that a statesman from whom they expect favours should not abjure office; and, finally, the man of the first Restoration, his pride being satisfied by a general appeal to his patriotism, agreed to appear again as the minister of a second.

Still, in coming to this determination, M. de Talleyrand adopted another. He had frequently, it is said, blamed himself for having in 1814 allowed the sovereign, who could not have done without him, to assume too absolute

an authority over him. He did not now expect to be at the head of the French Government long, but he deemed that his only chance of remaining there, or of doing any good whilst he was there, was to show an indifference to office, and a consciousness of power.

He appeared, then, when summoned to his Majesty's council, with a sketch of a proclamation which he called upon the King to sign, and which was, in fact, a recognition of the errors of his Majesty's late reign.

As the conversation that took place on the reading of this proclamation is related by a witness, I give it as narrated, the more especially as it shows the position which M. de Talleyrand assumed, and the cool self-confidence with which he confronted the indignation of the whole Bourbon family.

* "The Council assembles: it was composed of MM. de Talleyrand, Dambray, de Feltre, de Fancourt, Beurnonville, and myself" (M. de Beugnot is speaking).

"After a few words from M. de Talleyrand, explanatory of the subject which was to be brought before the Council, I commenced reading the proclamation, such as it remained after the corrections made in it; the King permitted me to read it to the end, and then, though not without some emotion that his face betrayed, told me to read it once more.

"Monsieur then spoke, and complained bitterly of the terms in which the proclamation was drawn up. 'The King,' he said, 'is made to ask pardon for the faults he committed. He is made to say that he allowed himself to be carried away by his affections, and that for the future he will conduct himself differently. Such expressions can

* "Le Conseil s'assemble: il se composait de MM. de Talleyrand, Dambray, de Feltre, de Fancourt, Beurnonville, et moi.

"Après deux mots de M. de Talleyrand sur ce dont le Roi a permis que le Conseil s'occupât, je commence la lecture du projet de la proclamation tel que les corrections l'avaient ajusté. Le Roi me laisse aller jusqu'au bout; puis, et non sans quelque émotion que trahit sa figure, m'ordonne de relire. Quand j'ai fini cette seconde lecture, Monsieur prend la parole; il se plaint avec vivacité des termes dans lesquels cette proclamation est rédigée. On y fait demander pardon au Roi des fautes qu'il a commises; on lui fait dire qu'il s'est laissé entraîner à ses affections, et promettre qu'il aura dans l'avenir une

only do this mischief—lower royalty; for in all other respects they say too much or too little.'

"M. de Talleyrand replied: 'Monsieur will pardon me if I differ from him; I find these expressions necessary, and appropriately placed. The King has had faults, his affections have misled him. There is nothing too much in this paper.' 'Is it I?' said Monsieur, 'whom it is intended indirectly to point out?' 'Why, yes, since Monsieur has placed the discussion on that ground, Monsieur has done a great deal of harm.' 'The Prince de Talleyrand forgets himself.' 'I fear so, but truth carries me away.' The Duc de Berry, with the accent of anger painfully restrained: 'Nothing but the presence of the King would permit me to tolerate this treatment of my father before me, and I would like to know——' At these words, pronounced in a higher tone than the rest, the King made a sign to the Duc de Berry, and said, 'Enough, my nephew; I am the only person to judge of the propriety of what is said in my presence, and in my Council. Gentlemen, I neither approve of the terms of this proclamation, nor of the conversation to which it has given rise. The framer must retouch his work, not forgetting that when I speak,

conduite toute différente. De pareilles expressions n'ont qu'un tort, celui d'avilir la royauté; car du reste elles disent trop ou ne disent rien du tout. M. de Talleyrand répond :

"'Monsieur, pardonnera si je diffère de sentiments avec lui. Je trouve ces expressions nécéssaires, et pourtant bien placées; le Roi a fait des fautes; ses affections l'ont égaré; il n'y a rien là de trop.'

"'Est-ce moi,' reprend Monsieur, 'qu'on veut indirectement désigner?'

"'Oui, puisque Monsieur a placé la discussion sur ce terrain, Monsieur a fait beaucoup de mal.'

"'Le prince de Talleyrand s'oublie!'

"'Je le crains, mais la vérité m'emporte.'

"M. le Duc de Berry, *avec l'accent d'une colère péniblement contrainte:* 'Il ne faut rien moins que la présence du Roi pour que je permette à qui que ce soit de traiter ainsi mon père devant moi, et je voudrais bien savoir.'

"A ces mots, prononcés d'un ton encore plus élevé que le reste, le Roi fait signe à M. le Duc de Berry, et dit: 'Assez, mon neveu: c'est à moi seul *à faire justice* de ce qui se dit en ma présence et dans mon Conseil. Messieurs, je ne peux approuver ni les termes de la proclamation, ni la discussion dont elle a été le sujet. Le rédacteur

it must be with a due sense of my dignity and high position.' The Duc de Berry, pointing at me: 'But it is not he who has strung all this nonsense together.' The King: 'Forbear interrupting, nephew, if you please. I repeat, gentlemen, that I have listened to this discussion with much regret. Let us turn to another subject.'"

XIII.

The proclamation with some slight alterations was published, and M. de Talleyrand finally carried his point, and formed his ministry. It is difficult to place oneself so completely in the troubled scene of Paris at this time, amidst the confused society composed of a defeated army, disappointed Republicans, triumphant Royalists, all uneasy and agitated in their actual position, and without the possibility of a common attachment to what was to be their government—it is difficult, I say, to take into a comprehensive glance the confused and troubled state of the French capital, disturbed by a thousand plots which might at any moment concentrate into one—and, therefore, it is difficult to appreciate the possible necessity of employing an able and dexterous adventurer, who had pulled many of the cords of the machine which had now to be brought into harmonious working. Still, I venture to consider that the Duke of Wellington committed an error in recommending, and M. de Talleyrand an error in accepting, M. Fouché as a member of the cabinet about to be formed.

The late minister of police was, in fact, at this time, an acknowledged scoundrel; he had gained our favour by betraying his master's secrets to our general; he had gained the favour of the extreme Royalists by concealing their plots, and keeping safe their persons when he was

retouchera son œuvre et ne perdra pas de vue les hautes convenances qu'il faut savoir garder quand on me fait parler.'

"M. le Duc de Berry, *en me désignant*: 'Mais ce n'est pas lui qui a enfilé toutes ces sottises là.'

"Le Roi: 'Mon neveu, cessez d'interrompre, s'il vous plaît. Messieurs, je répète que j'ai entendu cette discussion avec beaucoup de regrets. Passons à un autre sujet.'"—*Mémoires du Comte Beugnot*, tom. ii. p. 274.

serving the government they were attempting to overthrow. He had betrayed the Republicans of France to the Emperor of France, and he had subsequently betrayed the Emperor of France to the foreigner; and he had voted for the death of the brother of the monarch who was now to sit upon the throne. It was impossible for a man of this sort, whatever his abilities, not to bring ultimate disgrace on the government that enrolled him in its ranks; and, in fact, by his successive efforts, first to gain one party, and then to gain the other, by his personal ambition, by his constant intrigues, and by the general distrust he inspired, he deprived his colleagues of the consideration of all honest men, and exposed them consequently to the attacks of all violent factions.

But if England committed a fault in approving of the appointment of the Duc d'Otrante, she committed another fault still more important.

In designating M. de Talleyrand as the man best calculated to establish a government in France, and to consolidate an alliance between France and England, we ought to have been prepared to render the position of that minister tenable and honourable. Whether rightly or wrongly, we, in common with the other four powers, had made war, for a second time, on precisely the same principles on which we had made it for the first; since we had made it with the same declaration, that our conflict was with a man, and not with a nation. Our second peace, therefore, ought to have been in strict conformity with our first, or, rather, our first treaty of peace should have been maintained. We were dealing with the same monarch under the same circumstances, and we ought to have done so, preserving the same conditions.

If new circumstances of importance,—circumstances we had not foreseen,—rendered a change of policy necessary, that change should have been a large one, based on large considerations, and its necessity should have been clearly explained.

To take a few strips of territory, and a few pictures and statues, was the spite of the pigmy, not the anger of the giant.

Unfortunately, the power which rendered itself conspicuous for its animosity, was one which had been conspicuous for its valour. The descendant of all the Capets was insulted by the dirty linen of the Prussian soldier hung up to dry on the railing of his palace; and the intention of the Prussian army to blow up the bridge of Jena was only averted by M. de Talleyrand's timely precautions.

The story is recounted in rather an amusing manner by a gentleman I have frequently cited, and is characteristic of the subject of this memoir.

M. de Talleyrand, on hearing what the Prussians were about to do, and knowing in these occasions no time was to be lost, ordered M. de Beugnot to find Marshal Blücher wherever he might be, and to use the strongest language in his vocabulary on the part of the King and his government in order to induce the marshal to give such peremptory orders as would prevent the threatened outrage. "Shall I say," said M. de Beugnot, "that the King will have himself carried to the bridge, and be blown up with it?" "Not precisely; people will not believe us quite so heroic, but say something strong, very strong."

Off went M. de Beugnot to discover the marshal, who was easily to be found in a certain gambling house in the Palais Royal. Though by no means delighted at being disturbed in his only amusement, the marshal, on being assured that the name of the bridge was to be altered, gave the orders for stopping its destruction.

When M. de Beugnot returned, and gave an account of his mission, M. de Talleyrand said, good-humouredly, "Well, now I think that we may profit by your idea of this morning. You remember the King threatened to be carried to the bridge, and was prepared to be blown up with it. It will make a good newspaper article." "I profited," says Beugnot, "by the hint." The anecdote appeared in all the papers, and the King received the compliments made to him upon it with his accustomed affability and assurance.*

* "Mais, reprend vivement M. de Talleyrand, partez donc! Tandis que nous perdons le temps en allées et venues, et à disputer

But this was not all. The violent seizure of the works of art which France had till then retained, and which

sur la compétence, le pont sautera! Annoncez-vous de la part du Roi de France et comme son ministre, dites les choses les plus fortes sur le chagrin qu'il éprouve.

"Voulez-vous que je dise que le Roi va se faire porter de sa personne sur le pont, pour sauter de compagnie si le maréchal ne se rend pas?

"Non pas précisément: on ne nous croit pas faits pour un tel héroïsme; mais quelque chose de bon et de fort: vous entendez bien, quelque chose de fort.

"Je cours à l'hôtel du maréchal. Il était absent, mais j'y trouve les officiers de son état-major réunis. Je me fais annoncer de la part du Roi de France, et je suis reçu avec une politesse respectueuse; j'explique le sujet de ma mission à celui des officiers que je devais supposer le chef de l'état-major. Il me répond par des regrets sur l'absence de M. le maréchal, et s'excuse sur l'impuissance où il est de donner des ordres sans avoir pris les siens. J'insiste, on prend le parti d'aller chercher le maréchal qu'on était sur de trouver dans le lieu confident de ses plus chers plaisirs, au Palais-Royal, No. 113. Il arrive avec sa mauvaise humeur naturelle à laquelle se joignit le chagrin d'avoir été dérangé de sa partie de trente-et-un. Il m'écoute impatiemment, et comme il m'avait fort mal compris, il me répond de telle sorte qu'à mon tour je n'y comprends rien du tout. Le chef d'état-major reprend avec lui la conversation en allemand. Elle dure quelque temps, et j'entendais assez la langue pour m'apercevoir que le maréchal rejetait avec violence les observations fort raisonnables que faisait l'officier. Enfin, ce dernier me dit que M. le maréchal n'avait pas donné l'ordre pour la destruction du pont, que je concevais sans peine comment le nom qu'il avait reçu importunait des soldats prussiens; mais que du moment que le Roi de France avait fait justice de ce nom, il ne doutait pas que les entreprises commencées contre ce pont ne cessassent à l'instant même, et que l'ordre allait en être donné. Je lui demandai la permission d'attendre que l'ordre fût parti pour que j'eusse le droit de rassurer complétement Sa Majesté. Il le trouva bon. Le maréchal était retourné bien vite à son cher No. 113; l'ordre partit en effet. Je suivis l'officier jusque sur la place, et quand je vis que les ouvriers avaient cessé et se retiraient avec leurs outils, je vins rendre compte à M. de Talleyrand de cette triste victoire. Cela lui rendit un peu de bonne humeur. 'Puisque les choses se sont passées de la sorte, dit le prince, on pourrait tirer parti de votre idée de ce matin, que le Roi avait menacé de se faire porter sur le pont pour sauter de compagnie: il y a là matière d'un bon article de journal. Arrangez cela.'

"Je l'arrangeai en effet; l'article parut dans les feuilles du surlendemain. Louis XVIII. dût être bien effrayé d'un pareil coup de

might justifiably have been taken away at the first capture of Paris, was this time an unwarranted robbery, against which the King and his ministers could only protest in a manner which seemed offensive to the conquerors and feeble to the French people.

The payment of a large indemnity, the maintenance of a large foreign army, to be supported by France for seven years for the suppression of its own action and independence, were conditions that no French minister could sign with dignity, and least of all the minister who had taken so active a part with the coalition.

Having assisted at the appointment of a French government which was friendly to good relations with England, and it being our predominant interest to be on good terms with the French nation, we should have firmly resisted the imposition of such disgraceful conditions.

The natural consequence of our not doing so was that the Emperor Alexander, who had never forgiven M. de Talleyrand for his conduct at the recent congress, did not now disguise his personal antipathy to him, and told Louis XVIII. that he had nothing to expect from the cabinet of St. Petersburg as long as M. de Talleyrand was at the head of that of the Tuileries; but that, if his Majesty gave M. de Talleyrand's place to M. de Richelieu, he (the Emperor) would then do what he could to mitigate the severity of the conditions that all the allies now peremptorily demanded.

XIV.

The Duc de Richelieu, illustrious by his name, and with a character which did honour to that name, was one of those nobles who, when the state of France rendered it impossible as they thought to take an active part in their own country, could not, nevertheless, submit themselves to the useless inactivity of an *émigré's* life in the suburbs of London. He sought his fortune then in Russia, and found it in the Emperor Alexander's favour,

tête de sa part; mais ensuite il en accepta de bonne grâce la renommée. Je l'ai entendu complimenter de cet admirable trait de courage, et il répondait avec une assurance parfaite."

at whose desire he undertook the government of the Crimea, and marked his administration by an immense progress in the condition of that country.

The new order of things made him again a Frenchman; but, diffident of his own powers, he was far from being ambitious of office, and even declined it at the first Restoration. But the public has frequently a tendency to give people what it is thought they don't want, and there was a pretty general feeling that M. de Richelieu was a man destined to figure politically in his native land. His air was noble, his manners were polished and courteous, his honesty and straightforwardness proverbial, his habits of business regular, his abilities moderate; but there was that about him which is felt and cannot be defined, and which points out persons for the first places, if they are to have any places at all. Every one acknowledged then that if the Duc de Richelieu was to be a minister, he should be the first minister.

The King was delighted to get rid of M. de Talleyrand, whose presence reminded him of an obligation, and whose easy air of superiority was disagreeable to his pride. But it was deemed prudent to wait the result of the elections that were then pending.

They were decidedly unfavourable to the existing administration. A government, in fact, can only be moderate when it is strong, and the government of M. de Talleyrand was weak, for the only efficient support it could have had against the court party, was that of the King's favour, and this support it had not got.

Thus, the Royalists, emboldened by the foreign armies which were, so to speak, holding a rod over their opponents, acted with the force of a party which considered it must be victorious,—and carried all before it.

For a moment, M. de Talleyrand seemed disposed to resist the coming reaction, and even obtained the creation of some peers, whom the King unwillingly consented to name for that purpose. But, exposed to the violent hostility of the Emperor of Russia, and not having the active friendship of Great Britain, he saw that the struggle could not succeed; and, whilst foreseeing and

foretelling that his retirement would be the commencement of a policy that would eventually link France with the despotic governments of the continent in a war against liberal opinions, he resigned on the national ground that he could not sign such a treaty as the allies now proposed; and on the 24th of September ceased to be prime minister of France.

Louis XVIII. rewarded his retirement with an annual pension of one hundred thousand francs, and the high court charge of great chamberlain, the functions of which, by the way, the ex-minister, who might be seen coolly and impassively standing behind the King's chair on all state occasions, notwithstanding the cold looks of the sovereign and the sagacious sneers of his courtiers, always scrupulously fulfilled.

In their last official interview, his Majesty observed:

"You see to what circumstances oblige me: I have to thank you for your zeal, you are without reproach, and may remain unmolested at Paris."*

This phrase pierced through the usual coolness of the person it was addressed to. He replied with some vehemence:

"I have had the happiness of rendering sufficiently important services to the King, to believe that they are not forgotten. I cannot understand then what could oblige me to quit Paris. I shall remain there, and shall be too happy to find that the counsels which the King receives will not be such as to compromise his dynasty and France."†

As these remarks were made on either side before the cabinet, and subsequently repeated, they may be considered authentic.

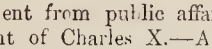
* "Vous voyez à quoi les circonstances me forcent: j'ai à vous remercier de votre zèle, vous êtes sans reproche, et rien ne vous empêche de rester tranquillement à Paris."

† "J'ai eu le bonheur de rendre au Roi assez de services pour croire qu'ils n'ont pas été oubliés; je ne comprendrais pas ce qui pourrait me forcer de quitter Paris. J'y resterai, et je serai trop heureux d'apprendre qu'on ne fera pas suivre au Roi une ligne capable de compromettre sa dynastie et la France."

Part VI.

FROM THE RETIREMENT OF M. DE TALLEYRAND TO THE REVOLUTION OF 1830.

M. de Talleyrand's retirement from public affairs during the period which closed with the dethronement of Charles X.—Appearance in the House of Peers on two occasions, to protest against the Spanish war and to defend the liberty of the press.—Reasons for the course he pursued.—Share in the advent of Louis Philippe.—Accepts the embassy to London.—Conduct and policy when there.—Retires after the Quadruple Alliance.—Discourse in the Institute on M. Reinhard.—Death.—Summary of character.



I.

M. de Talleyrand gave a proof of his sagacity when he foresaw that, with the violent Royalists entering into power under a minister named by the Autocrat of the North, a state of things was preparing that would lead to a war of opinion throughout Europe, and unite the governments that could not support liberal institutions with that party in the French nation which repudiated them. He was equally sagacious in retiring voluntarily from affairs, and doing so on national and not on party grounds. But at the same time he could not long have remained at the head of a parliamentary government, even had he been free from the peculiar difficulty which then surrounded him. To direct affairs with such a government, in critical times, one must have some of the passions of those times. M. de Talleyrand, as I have said at the beginning of this sketch, had no passions.

He represented the power of reason; but that power, which predominates at the end of every crisis, has its voice drowned at the commencement. His administration then was necessarily doomed: but he had at least the credit of having endeavoured, first to prevent and then to

moderate those acts of vengeance which a minority that obtains the supremacy always wishes to inflict on an adverse majority: for he furnished passports and even money (the budget of foreign affairs was charged with four hundred and fifty-nine thousand francs for this purpose) to all who felt desirous to quit France—Ney, though he did not profit by the indulgence, might have done so. The list of proscriptions at first contained one hundred persons, M. de Talleyrand reduced that number to fifty-seven.* Labédoyere—and this owing entirely to his own imprudence, in obliging the government either to release him publicly or to bring him to trial—was the only victim of an administration which wished to be moderate when every one was violent.

A most memorable epoch in French history now commenced—the constitutional education of the French nation. It went through a variety of vicissitudes. For a time the Royalist reaction, headed by the Comte d'Artois, prevailed. It was then for a moment stopped by the jealousy of Louis XVIII., who felt that France was in reality being governed by his brother, who could ride on horseback. After a short struggle the conflict between the two princes ceased, and M. de Villelle with more or less adroitness governed them both. The elder at last was deprived by death of the sceptre he had ceased to wield independently, and with the ardent desire he had ever felt to be loved by his countrymen, Charles X. legitimately commenced his right of ruling them. But a hesitating policy of conciliation producing after a short effort but a doubtful result, another policy was resolved upon. The King would show that he was king, and he selected a ministry ready to be his soldiers in a battle against popular ideas. The battle was fought: the King was vanquished. So passed the time from 1815 to 1830.

Within this epoch of fifteen years, during which it must be said that France, however agitated and divided, made

* Of whom nineteen to be tried by military law, the rest banished. A list of sixty, who were to be warned to quit France, was in the same spirit reduced to twenty.

an immense progress under the institutions that she owed in no small degree to M. de Talleyrand, that statesman was little more than a spectator of passing events. The new patriots, orators, journalists, generals of the day, occupied public attention, and he ceased to be considered except as one of those characters of history that have been too interesting in their day to be consigned quietly to posterity. Moreover, the judgment passed on him from time to time by contemporaneous writers was usually superficial and sometimes supercilious.

As to the deputies whom local influence and the zeal of parties returned to the lower chamber, they were for the most part unknown to him by their antecedents, and not worth knowing for their merits.

In the upper chamber, where men of high rank and intellectual eminence were certainly to be found, his personal influence was not great; the sympathies and recollections of that chamber, whether amongst the old Royalists or most distinguished Bonapartists, were against him. There was no one consequently to press him to take part in its debates, nor were there many subjects of discussion sufficiently important to arouse his indolence, and call forth with dignity the exertions of a statesman who had played so great a part amidst the great events of that marvellous period through which his career had run.

On one memorable occasion, however, he stepped boldly forward to claim—if affairs took the course which many thought most probable—the first place in a new system: this was when war, in 1823, was declared against Spain.

II.

That war was commenced by M. de Châteaubriand, who had always been M. de Talleyrand's antipathy, not merely as a war against the Spanish people, or in support of the Spanish monarch, but as a war which was to be considered an armed declaration in favour of ultra-monarchical principles, thus justifying all the previsions with which M. de Talleyrand had quitted office. A victory was certain to deliver France into the hands of the ultra-Royalist party;

defeat or difficulty was as certain to give power to more moderate men and more moderate opinions. In the one case, M. de Talleyrand had nothing to hope; in the other, it was necessary to fix attention on the fact that he had predicated misfortune. The struggle in Spain, moreover, depended greatly on the state of public opinion; and this alone made it advisable to endeavour to create as strong a belief as possible that men of weight and consideration looked upon it with apprehension and disfavour. It was under these circumstances that M. de Talleyrand expressed the following opinion:*

"Messieurs," this impressive discourse commences, "il y a aujourd'hui seize ans qu'appellé par celui qui gouvernait alors le monde à lui dire mon avis sur une lutte à engager avec le peuple espagnol, j'eus le malheur de lui déplaire, en lui dévoilant l'avenir, en révélant tous les dangers qui allaient naître en foule d'une aggression non moins injuste que téméraire. La disgrâce fut le prix de ma sincérité. Etrange destinée, que celle qui me ramène après ce long espace de temps à renouveler auprès du souverain légitime les mêmes efforts, les mêmes conseils. Le discours de la couronne a fait disparaître les dernières espérances de amis de la paix, et, menaçant pour l'Espagne, il est, je dois le dire, alarmant pour la France. . . . Oui, j'aurai le courage de dire toute la vérité. Ces mêmes sentiments chevaleresques qui, en 1789, entraînaient les cœurs généreux, n'ont pu sauver la monarchie légitime, ils peuvent encore la perdre en 1823."

* "Gentlemen,—It is to-day sixteen years ago, that, called by him who then governed the world to give him my opinion as to a conflict which we were about to engage in with the Spanish people, I had the misfortune to displease him by unveiling the future, and revealing all the dangers likely to spring from an aggression not less unjust than rash. Disgrace was the price of my sincerity. Strange destiny! that which brings me back after this long space of time to renew to my legitimate sovereign the same efforts, the same counsels. The speech of the crown has dispelled the last hopes of the friends of peace, and, menacing Spain, it, I ought to say it, alarming for France. . . . Yes, I will have the courage to tell all the truth. The chivalrous sentiments, which in 1789 carried away the generous hearts of that epoch, could not save the legitimate monarchy: they may lose it in 1823."

The Spanish war, in spite of these alarming prognostications, was successful; and courtiers sneered not unnaturally at the statesman who had denounced it. But if M. de Talleyrand had not shown his usual foresight, he had not acted contrary to his usual prudence. People, in deciding on the conduct they should adopt, can only calculate upon probabilities, and must, after all, as Machiavelli with his worldly experience observes, "leave much to chance." This sort of prophecy, contained in the speech I have just quoted from, had a good deal in its favour; M. de Châteaubriand himself had, as I once heard from the lips of a person to whom he spoke confidentially, the most serious doubts as to the issue of the approaching campaign; though he considered that its happy termination would firmly establish the Bourbons as sovereigns in France, and himself as their prime minister: in both of which conclusions he was wrong, though it seemed likely he would be right. The contemplated enterprise was, in fact, unpopular; the prince at its head was without capacity, the generals around him were on ill terms with each other, the soldiers themselves of doubtful allegiance. A considerable body of Frenchmen and some French soldiers were in the enemies' ranks, and were about, in the name of liberty and Napoleon II., to make an appeal, from the opposite shore of the Bidassoa, to their advancing comrades.

The courage of the nation now attacked had on many occasions been remarkable; the discipline of its armies had been lately improved; the policy of England was uncertain; the credit of France was far from good. These were all fair elements out of which it was by no means unreasonable to concoct a disastrous presage, which, like many presages, had a tendency to realise itself. But more especially it should be observed that the predictions of M. de Talleyrand, if unfortunate, would do him no harm, and if fortunate, would replace him on the pinnacle of power.

III.

The ex-minister of Louis XVIII. thus revived the recollections of the ex-minister of Napoleon le Grand; as

already the member of the Chamber of Peers had vindicated the principles of the veteran of the National Assembly; for on the 24th of July, 1821, we find him expressing the same sentiments in favour of the liberty of the press after practical experience, which at the commencement of his career he had proclaimed with theoretical anticipations.

As the question at issue is not yet solved in the country he was addressing, it may not be without interest to hear what he says:*

* * * * * *

"Without the liberty of the press there can be no representative government; it is one of its essential instruments—its chief instrument, in fact: every government has its principles, and we cannot remember too often that frequently those principles which are excellent for one government are detestable for another. It has been abundantly demonstrated by several members of this House, both in this and the preceding session, that without the liberty of the press representative government does not exist. I will not, then, repeat what you have already heard or read, and which is no doubt the frequent subject of your reflections.

"But there are two points of view in which it appears to me the question has not been sufficiently treated, and which I resolve into two propositions:

"1st. The liberty of the press is a necessity of the time.

* "Sans la liberté de la presse il n'y a point de gouvernement représentatif: elle est un de ses instruments essentiels, elle en est l'instrument principal: chaque gouvernement a les siens, et nous ne nous souvenons pas assez que souvent ceux qui sont bons pour tel gouvernement sont détestables pour tel autre. Il a été démontré jusqu'à l'évidence, par plusieurs membres de cette Chambre, qui, dans cette session et dans le précédentes, ont parlé sur cette matière, que sans la liberté de la presse il n'y a point de gouvernement représentatif. Je ne vous redirai donc point ce que vous avez tous ou entendu, ou lu, et ce qui a dû souvent être l'objet de vos méditations.

"Mais il est deux points de vue sous lesquels la question ne me paraît pas avoir été suffisamment examinée et que je réduis à ces deux propositions:

"1°. La liberté de la presse est une néecssité du temps.

"2nd. A government exposes itself when it obstinately refuses, and that for a lengthened period, what the time proclaims as necessary.

"The *mind is never completely stationary.* The discovery of yesterday is only a means to arrive at a fresh discovery to-morrow. One is nevertheless justified in affirming that it *appears to act by impulses, because there are moments when it appears particularly desirous of bringing forth—of producing; at others, on the contrary, when, satisfied by its conquests, it appears to rest itself, and is occupied in putting the treasures it has acquired in order, rather than in seeking after new ones.* The seventeenth century was one of these fortunate epochs. The human intellect, dazzled by the immense riches which the art of printing had put at its disposal, paused to gaze in admiration on the wondrous sight. Giving itself up entirely to the enjoyment of letters, science, and art, its glory and happiness became concentrated in the production of masterpieces. All the great men of the time of Louis XIV. vied with each other in embellishing a social order, beyond which they saw nothing, and desired nothing, and which appeared to them made to last as long as the glory of the great king, the object alike of their respect and of their enthusiasm. But when they had exhausted the

"2°. Un gouvernement s'expose quand il se refuse obstinément et trop longtemps à ce que le temps a proclamé néeessaire.

"L'esprit humain n'est jamais complètement stationnaire. La découverte de la veille n'est pour lui qu'un moyen de plus d'arriver à des découvertes nouvelles. Il est pourtant vrai de dire qu'il semble proeéder par erises, paree-qu'il y a des époques où il est plus partieulièrement tourmenté du besoin d'enfanter et de produire, d'autres, au contraire, où, satisfait de ses eonquêtes, il paraît se reposer sur lui-même, et plus occupé de mettre ordre à ses riehesses que d'en aequérir de nouvelles : le dix-septième sièele fut une de ces époques fortunées. L'esprit humain, étonné des richesses immenses dont l'imprimerie l'avait mis complètement en possession, s'arrêta d'admiration pour jouir de ee magnifique héritage. Tout entier aux jouissances des lettres, des sciences et des arts, il mit sa gloire et son bonheur à produire des ehefs-d'œuvre. Tous les grands génies du siècle de Louis XIV. travaillèrent a l'envi à embellir un ordre social au-delà duquel ils ne voyaient rien, ils ne desiraient rien, et qui leur paraissait devoir durer autant que la gloire du grand Roi, objet de

fertile mine of antiquity, their intelligent activity found itself almost compelled to search elsewhere, and discovered nothing new, except in speculative studies that embrace all the future, and of which the limits are unknown. It was amidst these dispositions that the eighteenth century dawned—a century so little resembling the preceding one. To the poetical lessons of Telemachus succeeded the theories of 'the *Esprit des Lois*,' and Port Royal was replaced by the Encyclopædia.

"I pray you to observe, gentlemen, that I neither censure nor approve: I simply relate.

"In calling to mind all the calamities poured out upon France during the Revolution, we must not be altogether unjust towards those superior men that brought it about; and we ought not to forget, that if in their writings they have not always been able to avoid falling into error, we owe to them the revelation of some great truths. Above all, let us not forget that we ought not to make them responsible for the precipitation with which France rushed practically into a career which her philosophers merely indicated. Thoughts were turned at once into action, and one might well say, 'Woe to him who in his foolish pride

leurs respects et de leur enthousiasme. Mais quand on eut épuisé cette mine féconde de l'antiquité, l'activité de l'esprit humain se trouva presque forcée de chercher ailleurs, et il ne trouva de choses nouvelles que dans les études spéculatives qui embrassent tout l'avenir, et dont les limites sont inconnues. Ce fut dans ces dispositions que s'ouvrit le dix-huitième siècle, qui devait si peu ressembler au précédent. Aux leçons poétiques de Télémaque succédèrent les théories de l'esprit des lois, et Port-Royal fut remplacé par l'Encyclopédie.

"Je vous prie de remarquer, Messieurs, que je ne blâme ni n'approuve : je raconte.

"En nous rappelant tous les maux versés sur la France pendant la révolution, il ne faut cependant pas être tout-à-fait injuste envers les génies supérieurs qui l'ont amenée ; et nous ne devons pas oublier que si dans leurs écrits ils n'ont pas toujours su se préserver de l'erreur, nous leur devons aussi la révélation de quelques grandes vérités. N'oublions pas surtout que nous ne devons pas les rendre responsables de la précipitation inconsidérée avec laquelle la France, presque tout entière, s'est lancée dans la carrière qu'ils s'étaient contentés d'indiquer. On a mis en pratique des aperçus, et toujours on a pu dire : 'malheur à celui qui dans son fol orgueil veut aller

would go beyond the necessities of his epoch! Some abyss or revolution awaits him.' But when we simply follow the necessity of an epoch, we are certain not to go astray.

"Now, gentlemen, do you wish to know what were in 1789 the real necessities of that epoch? Turn to the mandates of the different orders represented in the National Assembly. *All that were then the reflected wishes of enlightened men are what I call necessities.* The Constituent Assembly was only their interpreter when it proclaimed liberty of worship, equality before the law, individual liberty, the right of jurisdiction (that no one should be deprived of his natural judges), *the liberty of the press.*

"It was little in accordance with its epoch when it instituted a single chamber, when it destroyed the royal sanction, when it tortured the conscience, &c. &c. And, nevertheless, in spite of its faults, of which I have only cited a small number—faults followed by such great calamities—posterity which has begun for it accords to it the glory of establishing the foundation of our new public rights.

"*Let us hold, then, for certain, that all that is desired, that all that is proclaimed good and useful by all the*

au-delà des nécessités du temps, l'abime ou quelque révolution l'attendent.' Mais quand on ne fait que ce que le temps commande, on est sûr de ne pas s'égarer.

"Or, Messieurs, voulez-vous savoir quelles étaient en 1789 les véritables nécessités du temps? ouvrez les cahiers des différents ordres. Tout ce qui était alors le vœu réfléchi des hommes éclairés, voilà ce que j'appelle des nécessités. L'Assemblée Constituante n'en fut que l'interprète lorsqu'elle proclama la liberté des cultes, l'égalité devant la loi, la liberté individuelle, le droit des jurisdictions (nul ne peut être distrait de ses juges naturels), la liberté de la presse.

"Elle fut peu d'accord avec le temps lorsqu'elle institua une Chambre unique, lorsqu'elle détruisit le sanction royale, lorsqu'elle tortura les consciences, etc. etc. Et cependant, malgré ses erreurs, dont je n'ai cité qu'un petit nombre, erreurs suivies de si grandes calamités, la postérité qui a commencé pour elle, lui reconnaît la gloire d'avoir établi les bases de notre nouveau droit public.

"Tenons donc pour certain que ce qui est voulu, que ce qui est proclamé bon et utile par tous les hommes éclairés d'un pays, sans

enlightened men of a country, without variation, during a series of years diversely occupied, is a necessity of the times. Such, gentlemen, is the liberty of the press. I address myself to all those amongst you who are more particularly my contemporaries—was it not the dear object and wish of all those excellent men whom we so admired in our youth—the Malesherbes, the Trudaines—who surely were well worth the statesmen we have had since? The place which the men I have named occupy in our memories amply proves that the liberty of the press consolidates legitimate renown; and if it destroys usurped reputations, where is the harm?

"Having proved my first proposition, that the liberty of the press is in France the necessary result of the state of its society, it remains for me to establish my second proposition—that a government is in danger when it obstinately refuses what the state or spirit of its society requires.

"The most tranquil societies, and those which ought to be the most happy, always number amongst them a certain class of men who hope to acquire by the means of disorder those riches which they do not possess, and that importance which they ought never to have. Is it prudent to furnish the enemies of social order with pretexts for discontent,

variation pendant une suite d'années diversement remplies, est une néeessité du temps. Telle est, Messieurs, la liberté de la presse. Je m'adresse à tous eeux d'entre vous qui sont plus particulièrement mes eontemporains, n'était-elle pas l'objet des vœux de tous ces hommes exeellents que nous avons admirés dans notre jeunesse,—des Malesherbes, des Trudaines,—qui certes valaient biens les hommes d'état que nous avons depuis? La plaee que les hommes que j'ai nommés occupent dans nos souvenirs prouve bien que la liberté de la presse consolide les renommées légitimes; et si elle ruine les réputations usurpées, où done est le mal?

"Après avoir prouvé que la liberté de la presse est en Franee le résultat néeessaire de l'état aetuel de la soeiété, il me reste à établir ma seeonde proposition, qu'un gouvernement s'expose quand il se refuse obstinément à ee que le temps a proelamé une néeessité.

"Les soeiétés les plus tranquilles et qui devraient être les plus heureuses, renferment toujours dans leur sein un eertain nombre d'hommes qui aspirent à conquérir, à la faveur du désordre, les riehesses qu'ils n'ont pas et l'importance qu'ils ne devraient jamais avoir. Est-il prudent de mettre aux mains de ces ennemis de l'ordre

without which their individual efforts to promote disturbance would be impotent?

"Society in its progressive march is destined to experience new wants. *I can perfectly understand that governments ought not to be in any hurry to recognise them; but when it has once recognised them,* to take back what it has given, or, what comes to the same thing, to be always suspending its exercise, is a temerity of which I more than any one desire that those who conceived *the convenient* and *fatal thought* may not have to repent. The good faith of a government should never be compromised. *Now-a-days, it is not easy to deceive for long. There is some one who has more intelligence than Voltaire; more intelligence than Bonaparte; more intelligence than each of the Directors—than each of the ministers, past, present, and to come. That some one is everybody.* To engage in, or at least to persist in, a struggle against what according to general belief is a public interest, is a political fault,—and at this day all political faults are dangerous.

"When the press is free—when each one knows that his interests are or will be defended—all wait with patience a justice more or less tardy. Hope supports, and with

social, des motifs de mécontentement sans lesquels leur perversité serait éternellement impuissante?

"La société, dans sa marche progressive, est destinée à subir de nouvelles nécessités; je comprends que les gouvernements ne doivent pas se hâter de les reconnaître et d'y faire droit; mais quand il les ont reconnues, reprendre ce qu'on a donné, ou, ce qui revient au même, le suspendre sans cesse, c'est une témérité dont, plus que personne, je desire que n'aient pas à se repentir ceux qui en conçoivent la commode et funeste pensée. Il ne faut jamais compromettre la bonne foi d'un gouvernement. De nos jours, il n'est pas facile de tromper longtemps. Il y a quelqu'un qui a plus d'esprit que Voltaire, plus d'esprit que Bonaparte, plus d'esprit que chacun des directeurs, que chacun des ministres passés, présents, à venir, c'est tout le monde. S'engager, ou du moins persister dans une lutte où tout le monde se croit intéresse, c'est une faute, et aujourd'hui toutes les fautes politiques sont dangereuses.

"Quand la presse est libre, lorsque chacun peut savoir que ses intérêts sont ou seront défendus, on attend du temps une justice plus ou moins tardive; l'espérance soutient, et avec raison, car cette

reason, for this hope cannot be deceived for long; but when the press is enslaved, when no voice can be raised, discontent will soon exact, on the part of the government, either too much concession or too much repression."

On the 26th of February, 1822, M. de Talleyrand spoke on the same subject, commenting on the rights accorded by, and the intentions which had presided over, the charter. Such efforts on such subjects preserved for his name a national character, and connected the most memorable acts of his own career with the most ardent aspirations of his country.

IV.

Still, notwithstanding these occasional appearances on the public stage, it is certain that the easy though momentary triumph of a cause of which he had somewhat solemnly announced the almost certain defeat, disgusted him from further meddling in affairs, and much of his time was afterwards passed out of Paris, at Valençay, the estate which he meant should be ancestral, in Touraine. His fortune, moreover. was much affected by the bankruptcy of a commercial house in which he had engaged himself as what we call a "sleeping partner." Nevertheless he held, when in the capital, a great existence:—his drawing-room becoming to the Restoration what it had been to the best days of the Empire—a rival court, and a court which gathered to itself all the eminences of the old times, and all the rising young men of the new.

There, from his easy-chair, drawn up to the window which looks upon the Tuileries, and surrounded by those who had acted in the past with him, or who might make a future for him, he read with pleased composure the fall of ministry after ministry on the flushed countenance of the eager deputy rushing to or from the fatal vote; until, at the nomination of M. de Polignac, he repeated calmly to those about him, the phrase he is said to have pro-

espérance ne peut être longtemps trompée; mais quand la presse est asservie, quand nulle voix ne peut s'élever, les mécontentements exigent bientôt de la part du gouvernement, ou trop de faiblesse ou trop de répression."

nounced after the Russian campaign: "*C'est le commencement de la fin.*" Indeed, ever since the dismissal of the National Guard, and the failure of M. de Martignac's ministry, which, tried as it was and at the time it was, could not but fail, he spoke without reserve, though always with expressions of regret, to those in his intimacy, of the extreme peril to which the legitimate monarchy was hurrying; and he could do this with the more certainty, from the knowledge he possessed of Charles X.'s character, the good and bad qualities of which he considered equally dangerous.

V.

The following account of the share which M. de Talleyrand took in the new Revolution, that, after many ominous preludes, at last took place, was given me by an actor in the history he relates.

For the first two days of the insurrection, viz., the 27th and 28th of July, M. de Talleyrand said little or nothing, remaining quietly at home and refusing himself to all inquirers. On the third day he called to him his private secretary, and with that winning manner he knew so well how to adopt when he had any object to gain, said to him: "M. C——, I have a favour to request of you; go for me to St. Cloud" (the service was one of some danger and difficulty), "see if the royal family are still there, or what they are doing." The secretary went and found Charles X. just departing for Rambouillet. M. de Talleyrand, who had during his messenger's absence seen General Sebastiani, General Gérard, and two or three other influential persons of the same party and opinions, on hearing that the King had quitted St. Cloud, retired to his room and remained there alone for about two hours, when he again sent for the same gentleman, and this time his manners were, if possible, more persuasive than before. "I have yet another and greater favour to ask, M. C——. Go for me to Neuilly; get by some means or other to Madame Adelaide;* give her this piece of paper, and when she has read it, either see it burnt or bring it back

* The Duc d'Orléans' sister.

to me." The piece of paper contained merely these words: "Madame peut avoir toute confiance dans le porteur, qui est mon secrétaire." "When madame has read this, you will tell her that there is not a moment to lose. The Duc d'Orléans must be here to-morrow; he must take no other title than that of Lieutenant-general of the Kingdom, which has been accorded to him—'*le reste viendra.*'"

With this confidential message, M. C—— started. With great difficulty—for the gates of Neuilly were closed to every one—he got to the château and to Madame. On saying that he brought a message from M. de Talleyrand, "Ah, ce bon prince, j'étais sûre qu'il ne nous oublierait pas!"* The messenger then delivered his credentials and his message. "Tell the prince that I will pledge my word for my brother's following his advice. He shall be in Paris to-morrow," was the reply: after which M. C—— had the courage to ask, though with some hesitation, that the piece of paper should be destroyed or returned. It was given back to him, and he restored it to M. de Talleyrand, who did not, by the way, forget to ask for it. It only remains to say that the Duc d'Orléans did come to Paris the following day; did only take the title of Lieutenant-general; and that the rest did, as M. de Talleyrand had predicted, follow. Thus ended the last Revolution with which this singular man was blended.

When the message he sent arrived, the future king of the French was concealed, the conduct he seemed likely to pursue uncertain; and those who know anything of revolutions will be aware of the value of a day and an hour. Moreover, this prince got to the throne by the very door which M. de Talleyrand had warned Louis XVIII. to close, viz., a constitution proceeding *from* the people.

Nor is this all: the knowledge that M. de Talleyrand had recognised, and even been concerned in establishing, the new dynasty, had no slight influence on the opinion formed of it in other courts, and might be said more especially to have decided our own important and immediate recognition of it. He himself was then offered the

* Ah, the good prince! I knew he would not forget us.

post of minister of foreign affairs, but he saw it was more difficult and less important than that of ambassador to St. James', and while he refused the first position he accepted the last.

VI.

The choice was a fortunate one. No one else could have supplied the place of M. de Talleyrand in England at that juncture; he knew well and personally both the Duke of Wellington and Lord Grey, the chiefs of the opposing parties, and it was perhaps his presence at the British court, more than any other circumstance of the time, which preserved, in a crisis when all the elements of war were struggling to get loose, that universal peace which for so many years remained unbroken.

With a firm conviction, indeed, of the necessity of this peace, he took the best and only course for maintaining it. An ordinary diplomatist is occupied with the thousand small affairs passing through his hands, and the thousand ideas of more or less importance connected with them. M. de Talleyrand's great talent, as I have more than once said, was in selecting at once in every affair the most *important question* of the moment, and in sacrificing, without delay or scruple, whatever was necessary to attain his object with respect to that question.

He saw that the peaceful acceptance of the Orleans' dynasty could be obtained, and could only be obtained, by being on good terms with England. A quarrel with us was an European war; a good understanding with us rendered such a war unlikely, almost impossible. Belgium was the especial question on which all earlier negotiations turned, and on which the amity of our government depended. That country, smarting under many real, and irritated by the thought of many fancied, grievances, had thrown off the Dutch yoke. The Dutch troops, who with a little more vigour might have been victorious, had retreated, beaten, from Brussels; the frontier fortresses were in the hands of the insurgents, and it is no use disguising the fact that there was, is, and ever will be, a considerable party in France in favour of extending the

French frontier, and comprising Antwerp within the French dominions. England, however, was not then disposed, and probably will not at any time be disposed, with statesmen caring for the safety of their country, to submit to this. She had, in fact, as I have said at the peace of 1814, provided especially, as she thought, for the safety of the Netherlands, by the amalgamation of the Belgian and Dutch provinces into one kingdom, and by the fortresses which she had built or repaired for protecting that kingdom.

This policy was now overthrown, and could not be reconstructed without exciting the warlike and excited spirit of the French people. On the other hand, we could only make a limited sacrifice to French susceptibility and ambition. Much skill then was necessary on the part of all persons, but more especially on the part of the French negotiator, to avoid any serious wound to the interests of the one nation, or to the feelings of the other. There was a call, in short, for the steadiest discretion without any change of purpose; and all through the various phases of those long negotiations, by which jarring questions were finally composed, M. de Talleyrand warily persevered in his plan of planting the new government of France amongst the established governments of Europe through its alliance with Great Britain.

The establishment of conferences in London was one of the most artful of the measures adopted with this end. Here the ambassador of Louis Philippe was brought at once, and in union with the Cabinet of St. James', into almost daily and intimate communication with the representatives of the other great powers. A variety of misrepresentations were removed, and a variety of statements made, not merely useful for the questions which were especially under discussion, but for the general position and policy of the State which the veteran diplomatist represented.

The quadruple alliance—an alliance of the western and constitutional governments of Europe—was, in fact, a mere extension of the alliance between France and England, and a great moral exhibition of the trust placed by the

parties themselves in that alliance. With this remarkable and popular compact—a compact which embodied the best principles on which an Anglo-French alliance can be formed—the diplomatic career of M. de Talleyrand closed. He felt, as he himself said, that there "is a sort of space between death and life, which should be employed in dying decently."

The retirement of Lord Grey removed from the scene of public affairs in England that generation which, long accustomed to the reputation of a man who had filled half a century with his name, treated both himself and his opinions with the flattering respect due to old remembrances. To the men of the new government he was, comparatively speaking, a stranger. The busy time of their career he had passed in seclusion from affairs. They considered him, in a certain degree, as antiquated and gone by: a sentiment which he was keen enough to detect, and sensitive enough to feel deeply.

His opinions, indeed, became somewhat embittered by certain affronts or negligences of which, during the latter part of his embassy, he thought he had to complain; and, after his retirement, it is said that he rather counselled his royal master to consider that the advantages sought for in an alliance with England were obtained, and that the future policy of France should be to conciliate other powers.

VII.

At all events M. de Talleyrand, during his mission in England, not only sustained his previous reputation, but added very considerably to it. What struck the vulgar, and many, indeed, above the vulgar, who did not remember that the really crafty man disguises his craft, was the plain, open, and straightforward way in which he spoke of and dealt with all public matters, without any of those mysterious devices which distinguish the simpleton in the diplomacy from the statesman who is a diplomatist. In fact, having made up his mind to consider the English alliance at this time essential to his country, he was well aware that the best and only way of obtaining it was by

such frank and fair dealing as would win the confidence of British statesmen.

Lord Palmerston told me that his manner in diplomatic conferences was remarkable for its extreme absence of pretension, without any derogation of authority. He sat, for the most part, quiet, as if approving: sometimes, however, stating his opinion, but never arguing or discussing;—a habit foreign to the natural indolence which accompanied him throughout his active career, and which he also condemned on such occasions, as fruitless and impolitic: "I argue before a public assembly," he used to say, "not because I hope to convince any one there, but because I wish my opinions to be known to the world. But, in a room beyond which my voice is not to extend, the attempt to enforce my opinion against that which another is engaged to adopt, obliges him to be more formal and positive in expressing his hostility, and often leads him, from a desire to shine in the sense of his instructions, to go beyond them."

Whatever M. de Talleyrand did, therefore, in the way of argument, he usually did beforehand, and alone, with the parties whom he was afterwards to encounter, and here he tried to avoid controversy. His manner was to bring out the principal point in his own opinion, and present it to the best advantage in every possible position.

Napoleon complained of this, saying, he could not conceive how people found M. de Talleyrand eloquent. "Il tournait toujours sur la même idée." * But this was a system with him, as with Fox, who laid it down as the great principle for an orator who wished to leave an impression.

He was apt, however, to ask to have a particular word or sentence, of which he had generally studied the bearing and calculated the effect, introduced into a paper under discussion, and from the carelessness with which he made the request it was usually complied with. There was something in this silent way of doing business, which disappointed those who expected a more frequent use of the brilliant weapons which it was well known that the great

* He always turned round the same idea.

wit of the day had at his command. But in the social circle which he wished to charm, or with the single individual whom he wished to gain, the effect of his peculiar eloquence generally overran the expectation.

M. de Bacourt, who was secretary to his embassy in London, informed me "that M. de Talleyrand rarely wrote a whole despatch," but that a variety of little notes and phrases were usually to be found in his portfolio. When the question which these notes referred to had to be treated, they were produced, and confided to him (M. de Bacourt), who was told the general sense of the document he was to write, and how such memoranda were to be introduced. Finally, a revisal took place, and the general colouring, which proved that the despatch came from the ambassador, and not from his chancery, was fused over the composition. As a general rule in business, M. de Talleyrand held to the rule, that a chief should never do anything that a subaltern could do for him.

"You should always," he used to say, "have time to spare, and rather put off till to-morrow what you cannot do well and easily to-day, than get into that hurry and flurry which is the necessary consequence of feeling one has too much to do."

I have painted the subject of this sketch personally in his early life. Towards the close of his existence, the likenesses of him that are common are sufficiently resembling. His head, with a superfluity of hair, looked large, and was sunk deep into an expanded chest. His countenance was pale and grave, with a mouth, the under-lip rather protruding, which formed itself instantly and almost instinctively into a smile that was sarcastic without being ill-natured. He talked little in general society, merely expressing at intervals some opinion that had the air of an epigram, and which produced its effect as much from the manner with which it was brought out, as from its intrinsic merit. He was, in fact, an actor, but an actor with such ease and nonchalance that he never seemed more natural than when he was acting.

His recorded *bon mots*, of which I have given some, have become hackneyed, especially the best. But I will

venture to mention a few that occur to me, as I am writing, and which are remarkable as expressing an opinion concerning an individual or a situation.

When the Comte d'Artois wished to be present at the councils of Louis XVIII., M. de Talleyrand opposed the project. The Comte d'Artois was offended, and reproached the minister. "Un jour," said M. de Talleyrand, "Votre Majesté me remerciera pour ce qui déplaît a Votre Altesse Royale."

M. de Châteaubriand was no favourite with M. de Talleyrand. He condemned him as an affected writer, and an impossible politician. When the "Martyrs" first appeared, and was run after by the public with an appetite that the booksellers could not satisfy, M. de Fontanes, after speaking of it with an exaggerated eulogium, finished his explanation of the narrative by saying that Eudore and Cymodocée were thrown into the circus and devoured "par les bêtes." "Comme l'ouvrage," said M. de Talleyrand.

Some person saying that Fouché had a great contempt for mankind, "C'est vrai," said M. de Talleyrand, "cet homme s'est beaucoup étudié."

There is a certain instinct which most persons have as to their successor; and when some one asked M. de Talleyrand a little before the Duc de Richelieu, governor of Odessa, was appointed prime minister in his own country, whether he, M. de Talleyrand, really thought that the Duc was fit to govern France, he replied, to the surprise of the questioner, "Most assuredly;" adding, after a slight pause, "No one knows the Crimea better."

A lady, using the privilege of her sex, was speaking with violence of the defection of the Duc de Raguse. "Mon Dieu, madame," said M. de Talleyrand, "tout cela ne prouve qu'une chose. C'est que sa montre avançait et tout le monde était à l'heure."

A strong supporter of the chamber of peers, when there was much question as to its merits, said, "At least you there find consciences." "Ah, oui," said M. de Talleyrand, "beaucoup, beaucoup de consciences. Semonville, par exemple, en a au moins deux."

Louis XVIII., speaking of M. de Blacas before M. de

Talleyrand had expressed any opinion concerning him, said, "Ce pauvre Blacas, il aime la France, il m'aime, mais on dit qu'il est suffisant." "Ah oui, Sire, suffisant et insuffisant."

As Madame de Staël was praising the British Constitution, M. de Talleyrand, turning round, said in a low, explanatory tone, "*Elle admire surtout l'habeas corpus.*"

One evening at Holland House the company had got into groups, talking over some question of the moment in the House of Commons; and thus M. de Talleyrand, left alone, got up to go away, when Lord Holland, with his usual urbanity, following him to the door, asked where he was going so early. "Je vais aux *Travellers*, pour entendre ce que vous dites ici."

We could prolong almost indefinitely this record of sayings from which M. de Talleyrand, notwithstanding his many services and great abilities, derives his popular and traditional reputation: but, in reality, they belong as much to the conversational epoch at which he entered the world, as to himself.

VIII.

On quitting England, he quitted not only diplomacy, as I have said, but public life, and passed the remainder of his days in the enjoyment of the highest situation, and the most agreeable and cultivated society, that his country could afford.

His fortune and ability might now, according to the Grecian sage, be estimated; for his career was closed; and, as the old sought his saloon as the hearth on which their brighter recollections could be revived, so the young were glad to test their opinions by the experience of "the politic man," who had passed through so many vicissitudes, and walked with a careless and haughty ease over the ruins of so many governments, at the fall of which he had assisted. He himself, with that cool presence of mind for which he was so remarkable, aware that he had but a few years between the grave and himself, employed them in one of his great and constant objects, that of prepossessing the age about to succeed him in his favour, and explaining

to those whom he thought likely to influence the coming generation, the darker passages of his brilliant career. To one distinguished person, M. Montalivet, who related to me the fact, he once said: "You have a prejudice against me, because your father was an Imperialist, and you think I deserted the Emperor. I have never kept fealty to any one longer than he has himself been obedient to common sense. But, if you judge all my actions by this rule, you will find that I have been eminently consistent; and where is there so degraded a human being, or so bad a citizen, as to submit his intelligence, or sacrifice his country, to any individual, however born, or however endowed?"

This, indeed, in a few words, was M. de Talleyrand's theory; a theory which has formed the school, that without strictly adhering to the principle that common sense should be the test of obedience, bows to every authority with a smile and shrug of the shoulders, and the well-known phrase of "*La France avant tout.*"

Shortly previous to his last illness he appeared (evidently with the intention of bidding the world a sort of dignified adieu) in the tribune of the Institute. The subject which he chose for his essay was M. Reinhard, who had long served under him, and was just dead, and between whom and himself, even in the circumstance of their both having received an ecclesiastical education, there was some sort of resemblance. The discourse is interesting on this ground, and also as a review of the different branches of the diplomatic service, and the duties attached to each—forming a kind of legacy to that profession of which the speaker had so long been the ornament.

IX.

"GENTLEMEN,—*

"I was in America when I was named a member of the Institute, and placed in the department of moral

* "MESSIEURS,—

"J'étais en Amérique, lorsque l'on eut la bonté de me nommer Membre de l'Institut, et de m'attacher à la classe des sciences

and political sciences, to which I have had the honour of being attached ever since it was first established.

"On my return to France, I made it my principal object to attend its meetings, and to express to my new colleagues, many of whom we now so justly regret, the pleasure it gave me to find myself one of their number. At the first sitting I attended, the *bureau* was being renewed, and I had the honour of being named secretary. During six months, I drew up, to the best of my ability, the minutes of the proceedings, but my labours betrayed perhaps a little too plainly my diffidence, for I had to report on a work, the subject of which was new to me. That work, which had cost one of our most learned colleagues many researches, many sleepless nights, was 'A Dissertation on the Riparian Laws.' It was about the same period that I read at our public meetings several papers, which were received with such indulgence as to be thought worthy of being inserted in the memoirs of the Institute. But forty years have now elapsed, during which I have been a stranger to this tribune; first, in consequence of frequent absence; then from duties, to which I felt bound to devote my whole time and attention; I must also add, from that discretion, which, in times of

morales et politique, à la quelle j'ai depuis son origine, l'honneur d'appartenir.

"A mon retour en France, mon premier soin fut de me rendre à ses séances, et de témoigner aux personnes qui la composaient alors, et dont plusieurs nous ont laissé de justes regrets, le plaisir que j'avais de me trouver un de leurs collègues. A la première séance à laquelle j'assistai, on renouvelait le bureau et on me fit l'honneur de me nommer secrétaire. Le procès-verbal que je rédigeai pendant six mois avec autant de soin que je le pouvais, portait, peut-être un peu trop, le caractère de ma déférence; car j'y rendais compte d'un travail qui m'était fort étranger. Ce travail, qui sans doute avait coûté bien des recherches, bien des veilles à un de nos plus savants collègues, avait pour titre 'Dissertation sur les Lois Ripuaires.' Je fis aussi, à la même époque, dans nos assemblées publiques, quelques lectures que l'indulgence, qui m'était accordée alors, a fait insérer dans les Mémoires de l'Institut. Depuis cette époque, quarante années se sont écoulées, durant lesquelles cette tribune m'a été comme interdite, d'abord par beaucoup d'absences ensuite par des fonctions auxquelles mon devoir était d'appartenir tout entier: je dois dire aussi, par la discrétion que les temps difficiles exigent d'un

difficulty, is required of a man employed in public affairs ; and finally, at a later period, from the infirmities, usually brought on, or at least aggravated, by age.

"At the present moment, I feel myself called upon to perform a duty, and to make a last appearance before this Assembly, in order that the memory of a man, known to the whole of Europe ;—of a man whom I loved, and who, from the very foundation of the Institute, has been our colleague, should receive here a public testimony of our esteem and regret. His position with respect to my own furnishes me with the means of speaking with authority of several of his merits. His principal, but I do not say his only, claim to distinction, consists of a correspondence of forty years, necessarily unknown to the public, and likely to remain so for ever. I asked myself, 'Who will mention this fact within these walls? who, especially, will consider himself under the obligation of directing your attention to it, if the task be not undertaken by me, to whom the greater part of this correspondence was addressed, to whom it always gave so much pleasure, and often so much assistance in those ministerial duties, which I had to perform during three reigns so very different in character ?'

"The first time I saw M. Reinhard, he was thirty, and

homme livré aux affaires ; et enfin, plus tard, par les infirmités que la vieillesse amène d'ordinaire avec elle, ou du moins qu'elle aggrave toujours.

"Mais aujourd'hui j'éprouve le besoin, et je regarde comme un devoir de m'y présenter une dernière fois, pour que la mémoire d'un homme connu dans toute l'Europe, d'un homme que j'aimais, et qui, depuis la formation de l'Institut, était notre collègue, reçoive ici un témoignage public de notre estime et de nos regrets. Sa position et la mienne me mettent dans le cas de révéler plusieurs de ses mérites. Son principal, je ne dis pas son unique titre de gloire, consiste dans une correspondance de quarante années nécessairement ignorée du public, qui, très-probablement, n'en aura jamais connaissance. Je me suis dit : 'Qui en parlera dans cette enceinte? Qui sera surtout dans l'obligation d'en parler, si ce n'est moi, qui en ait reçu la plus grande part, à qui elle fut toujours si agréable, et souvent si utile dans les fonctions ministérielles que j'ai eues à remplir sous trois règnes . . . très-différents ?'

"Le comte Reinhard avait trente ans, et j'en avais trente-sept,

I thirty-seven, years of age. He entered public life with the advantage of a large stock of acquired knowledge. He knew thoroughly five or six languages, and was familiar with their literature. He could have made himself remarkable as an historian, as a poet, or as a geographer; and it was in this last capacity that he became a member of the Institute, from the day it was founded.

"Already at this time he was a member of the Academy of Sciences of Göttingen. Born and educated in Germany, he had published in his youth several pieces of poetry, which had brought him under the notice of Gesner, Wieland, and Schiller. He was obliged at a later period to take the waters of Carlsbad, where he was so fortunate as to find himself frequently in the society of the celebrated Goethe, who appreciated his taste and acquirements sufficiently to request to be informed by him of everything that was creating a sensation in the French literary world. M. Reinhard promised to do so; engagements of this kind between men of a superior order are always reciprocal, and soon become ties of friendship; those formed between M. Reinhard and Goethe gave rise to a correspondence, which is now published in Germany.

"We learn from these letters that when he had arrived

quand je le vis pour le première fois. Il entrait aux affaires avec un grand fonds de connaissances acquises. Il savait bien cinq ou six langues dont les littératures lui étaient familières. Il eût pu se rendre célèbre comme poëte, comme historien, comme géographe; et c'est en cette qualité qu'il fut membre de l'Institut, des que l'Institut fut créé.

"Il était déjà à cette époque, membre de l'Académie des Sciences de Göttingen. Nè et élevé en Allemagne, il avait publié dans sa jeunesse quelques pièces de vers qui l'avaient fait remarquer par Gesner, par Wieland, par Schiller. Plus tard, obligé pour sa santé, de prendre les eaux de Carlsbad, il eut de bonheur d'y trouver et d'y voir souvent le célèbre Göthe, qui apprécia assez son goût et ses connaissances pour désirer d'être averti par lui de tout ce qui faisait quelque sensation dans la littérature française. M. Reinhard le lui promit: les engagements de ce genre, entre les hommes d'un ordre superieur, sont toujours réciproques et deviennent bientôt des liens d'amitié: ceux qui se formèrent entre M. Reinhard et Göthe donnèrent lieu à une correspondance que l'on imprime aujourd'hui en Allemagne.

"On y verra, qu'arrivé à cette époque de la vie où il faut définitive-

at that time of life, when it is necessary to select definitively the profession for which one feels most aptitude, M. Reinhard, before making his final decision, reflected seriously upon his natural disposition, his tastes, his own circumstances and those of his family; and then made a choice singular at that time, for instead of choosing a career that promised independence, he gave the preference to one in which it is impossible to secure it. The diplomatic career was selected by him, nor is it possible to blame him; qualified for all the duties of this profession, he has successively fulfilled them all, and each with distinction.

"And I would here venture to assert that he had been successfully prepared for the course he adopted by his early studies. He had been remarked as a proficient in theology at the Seminary of Denkendorf, and at that of the Protestant faculty of Tübingen, and it was to this science especially that he owed the power, and at the same time the subtlety, of reasoning, that abounds in all his writings. And to divest myself of the fear of yielding to an idea which might appear paradoxical, I feel obliged to bring before you the names of several of our greatest diplomatists, who were at once theologians and celebrated in history for having conducted the most important political negotiations of their day. There was the chancellor, Cardinal

ment choisir un état M. Reinhard fit sur lui-même, sur les goûts, sur sa position et sur celle de sa famille un retour sérieux qui précéda sa détermination; et alors, chose remarquable pour le temps, à des carrières où il eût pu être indépendant, il en préféra une où il ne pouvait l'être. C'est à la carrière diplomatique qu'il donna la préférence, et il fit bien: propre à tous les emplois de cette carrière, il les a successivement tous remplis, et tous avec distinction.

"Je hasarderai de dire ici que ses études premières l'y avait heureusement préparé. Celle de la théologie surtout, où il se fit remarquer dans le Séminaire de Denkendorf et dans celui de la faculté protestante de Tübingen, lui avait donné une force et en même temps une souplesse de raissonnement que l'on retrouve dans toutes les pièces qui sont sorties de sa plume. Et pour m'ôter à moi-même la crainte de me laisser aller à une idée qui pourrait paraître paradoxale, je me sens obligé de rappeler ici les noms de plusieurs de nos grands négociateurs, tous théologiens, et tous remarqués par l'histoire comme ayant conduit les affaires politiques

Duprat, equally skilled in canon and civil law, who established with Leo X. the basis of the Concordat, of which several articles are still retained. Cardinal d'Ossat, who, in spite of the efforts made by several great powers, succeeded in effecting a reconciliation between Henry IV. and the Court of Rome. The study of his letters is still recommended at the present day to young men who are destined for political life. Cardinal de Polignac, a theologian, poet and diplomatist, who, after so many disastrous campaigns, was able to preserve, by the treaty of Utrecht, the conquests of Louis XIV. for France.

"The names I have just mentioned appear to me sufficient to justify my opinion that M. Reinhard's habits of thought were considerably influenced by the early studies to which his education had been directed by his father.

"On account of his solid, and, at the same time, various acquirements, he was called to Bordeaux, in order to discharge the honourable but modest duties of a tutor in a Protestant family of that city. There he naturally became acquainted with several of those men whose talents, errors, and death have given so much celebrity to our first legislative assembly. M. Reinhard was easily persuaded by them to devote himself to the service of France.

les plus importantes de leurs temps: le cardinal chancelier Duprat aussi versé dans le droit canon que dans le droit civil, et qui fixa avec Léon X. les bases du concordat dont plusieurs dispositions subsistent encore aujourd'hui. Le cardinal d'Ossat, qui, malgré les efforts de plusieurs grandes puissances, parvint à réconcilier Henry IV. avec le cour de Rome. Le recueil de lettres qu'il a laissé est encore prescrit aujourd'hui aux jeunes gens qui se destinent à la carrière politique. Le cardinal de Polignac, théologien, poëte et négociateur, qui, après tant de guerres malheureuses sut conserver à la France, par le traité d'Utrecht, les conquêtes de Louis XIV.

"Les noms que je viens de citer me paraissent suffire pour justifier l'influence qu'eurent, dans mon opinion, sur les habitudes d'esprit de M. Reinhard, les premières études vers lesquelles l'avait dirigé l'éducation paternelle.

"Les connaissances à la fois solides et variées qu'il y avait acquises l'avaient fait appeler à Bordeaux pour remplir les honorables et modestes fonctions de précepter dans une famille protestante de cette ville. Là, il se trouvà naturellement en relation des hommes dont le talent, les erreurs et la mort jetèrent tant d'éclat sur notre

"It is not necessary to follow him step by step through all the vicissitudes of his long career. In the succession of offices confided to him, now of a higher, now of a lower order, there seems to be a sort of inconsistency and absence of regularity, which, at the present day, we should have some difficulty in conceiving. But, at that time, people were as free from prejudice with respect to places as to persons. At other periods, favour, and sometimes discernment, used to confer situations of importance. But, in the days of which I speak, every place had to be won. Such a state of things very quickly leads to confusion.

"Thus, we find M. Reinhard first secretary of legation at London; occupying the same post at Naples; minister plenipotentiary to the Hanseatic towns of Hamburg, Bremen, and Lübeck; chief clerk of the third division in the department of foreign affairs; minister plenipotentiary at Florence; minister of foreign affairs; minister plenipotentiary to the Helvetian Republic; consul-general at Milan; minister plenipotentiary to the Circle of Lower Saxony; president in the Turkish provinces beyond the Danube, and commissary-general of commercial relations

première assemblée legislative. M. Reinhard se laissa facilement entraîner par eux à s'attacher au service de la France.

"Je ne m'astreindrai point à le suivre pas à pas à travers les vicissitudes dont fut remplie la longue carrière qu'il a parcourue. Dans les nombreux emplois que lui furent confiés, tantôt d'un ordre élevé, tantôt d'un ordre inférieur, il semblerait y avoir une sorte d'incohérence, et comme une absence de hiérarchie que nous aurions aujourd'hui de la peine à comprendre. Mais à cette époque il n'y avait pas plus de préjugés pour les places qu'il n'y en avait pour les personnes. Dans d'autres temps, la faveur, quelquefois le discernement, appelaient à toutes les situations éminentes. Dans le temps dont je parle, bien ou mal, toutes les situations étaient conquises. Un parcil état de choses mène bien vite à la confusion.

"Aussi, nous voyons M. Reinhard, premier secrétaire de la légation à Londres; occupant le même emploi à Naples; ministre plénipotentiaire auprès des villes anséatiques, Hambourg, Brême et Lubeck; chef de la troisième division au département des affaires étrangères; ministre plénipotentiaire à Florence; ministre des relations extérieures; ministre plénipotentiaire en Helvétie; consul-général à Milan; ministre plénipotentiaire près le cercle de Basse-Saxe; président dans les provinces turques au delà du Danube, et commissaire-général des relations commerciales en Moldavie; ministre pléni-

in Moldavia; minister plenipotentiary to the King of Westphalia; director of the *Chancellerie* in the department of foreign affairs; minister plenipotentiary to the Germanic Diet and the free city of Frankfort; and, finally, minister plenipotentiary at Dresden.

"What a number of places, of charges, and of interests, all confided to one man, and this at a time when it seemed likely that his civil talents would be less justly appreciated, inasmuch as that war appeared to decide every question.

"You do not expect me, gentlemen, to give here a detailed account of all M. Reinhard's labours in the various employments, which I have just enumerated. This would require a volume.

"I have only to call your attention to the manner in which he regarded the duties he had to perform, whether as chief clerk, minister, or consul.

"Although M. Reinhard did not possess at that time the advantage which he might have had a few years later of being able to study excellent examples, he was already perfectly aware of the numerous and various qualities that ought to distinguish a chief clerk in the foreign office. A delicate tact had made him feel that the habits of a chief clerk ought to be simple, regular, and retired; that, a

potentiaire auprès du roi de Westphalie; directeur de la chancellerie du département des affaires étrangères; ministre plénipotentiaire auprès de la diète germanique, et de la ville libre de Frankfort, et, enfin, ministre plénipotentiaire à Dresde.

"Que de places, que d'emplois, que d'intérêts confiés à un seul homme, et cela, à une époque où les talents paraissaient devoir être d'autant moins appréciés que la guerre semblait, à elle seule, se charger de toutes les affaires!

"Vous n'attendez donc pas de moi, Messieurs, qu'ici je vous rende compte en détail, et date par date, de tous les travaux de M. Reinhard dans les différents emplois dont vous venez d'entendre l'énumération. Il faudrait faire un livre.

"Je ne dois parler devant vous que de la manière dont il comprenait les fonctions qu'il avait à remplir, qu'il fût chef de division, ministre, ou consul.

"Quoique M. Reinhard n'eût point alors l'avantage qu'il aurait eu quelques années plus tard, de trouver sous ses yeux d'excellents modèles, il savait déjà combien de qualités, et de qualités diverses, devaient distinguer un chef de division des affaires étrangères. Un tact délicat lui avait fait sentir que les mœurs d'un chef de division

stranger to the bustle of the world, he ought to live solely for his duty, and devote to it an impenetrable secrecy; that, always prepared to give an answer respecting facts or men, he must have every treaty fresh in his memory, know its historical date, appreciate its strong and weak points, its antecedents and consequences, and finally be acquainted with the names of its principal negotiators, and even with their family connections; that, in making use of this knowledge, he ought, at the same time, to be cautious not to offend a minister's self-esteem, always so sensitive, and, even when he should have influenced the opinion of his chief, to leave his success in the shade; for he knew that he was to shine only by a reflected light. Still, he was aware that much consideration would be the reward of so pure and modest a life.

"M. Reinhard's power of observation did not stop here; it had taught him to understand how rare is the union of qualities necessary to make a minister of foreign affairs. Indeed, a minister of foreign affairs ought to be gifted with a sort of instinct, which should be always prompting him, and thus guarding him, when entering into any discussion, from the danger of committing himself. It is requisite that he should possess the faculty of appearing

devaient être simples, régulières, retirées; qu'étaanger au tumulte du monde, il devait vivre uniquement pour les affaires et leur vouer un secret impénétrable; que, toujours prêt à répondre sur les faits et sur les hommes, il devait avoir sans cesse présents à la mémoire tous les traités, connaître historiquement leurs dates, apprécier avec justesse leurs côtés forts et leurs côtés faibles, leurs antécédents et leurs conséquences; savoir, enfin, les noms des principaux négociateurs, et même leurs relations de famille; que, tout en faisant usage de ces connaissances, il devait prendre garde à inquiéter l'amour-propre toujours si clairvoyant du ministre, et qu'alors même qu'il l'entraînait à son opinion, son succès devait rester dans l'ombre; car il savait qu'il ne devait briller que d'un éclat réfléchi; mais il savait aussi que beaucoup de considération s'attachait naturellement à une vie aussi pure et aussi modeste.

"L'esprit d'observation de M. Reinhard ne s'arrêtait point là; il l'avait conduit à comprendre combien la réunion des qualités nécessaires à un ministre des affaires étrangères est rare. Il faut, en effet, qu'un ministre des affaires étrangères soit doué d'une sorte d'instinct qui, l'avertissant promptement, l'empêche, avant toute discussion, de jamais se compromettre. Il lui faut la faculté de se montrer ouvert

open, while remaining impenetrable; of masking reserve with the manner of frankness; of showing talent even in the choice of his amusements. His conversation should be simple, varied, unexpected, always natural, and at times *naïve;* in a word, he should never cease for an instant during the twenty-four hours to be a minister of foreign affairs.

"Yet all these qualities, however rare, might not suffice, if they did not find in sincerity a guarantee which they almost always require. I must not omit to notice here this fact, in order to destroy a prejudice, into which people are very apt to fall. No! diplomacy is not a science of craft and duplicity. If sincerity be anywhere requisite, it is especially so in political transactions; for it is that which makes them solid and durable. It has pleased people to confound reserve with cunning. Sincerity never authorizes cunning, but it admits of reserve; and reserve has this peculiarity, that it increases confidence.

"If he be governed by the honour and interests of his country, by the honour and interests of his sovereign, by the love of a liberty based upon order and the rights of all men, a minister of foreign affairs, who knows how to fill his post, finds himself thus in the noblest position to which a superior mind can aspire.

en restant impénétrable ; d'être réservé avec les formes de l'abandon, d'être habile jusque dans le choix de ses distractions ; il faut que sa conversation soit simple, variée, inattendue, toujours naturelle et parfois naïve ; en un mot, il ne doit pas cesser un moment, dans les vingt-quatre heures, d'être ministre des affaires étrangères.

"Cependant, tout ces qualités, quelque rares qu'elles soient, pourraient n'être pas suffisantes, si la bonne foi ne leur donnait une garantie dont elles ont presque toujours besoin. Je dois le rappeler ici, pour détruire un préjugé assez généralement répandu : non, la diplomatie n'est point une science de ruse et de duplicité. Si la bonne foi est nécessaire quelque part, c'est surtout dans les transactions politiques, car c'est elle qui les rend solides et durables. On a voulu confondre la réserve avec la ruse. La bonne foi n'autorise jamais la ruse, mais elle admet la réserve ; et la réserve a cela de particulier, c'est qu'elle ajoute à la confiance.

"Dominé par l'honneur et l'intérêt du prince, par l'amour de la liberté, fondé sur l'ordre et sur les droits de tous, un ministre des affaires étrangères, quand il sait l'être, se trouve ainsi placé dans la plus belle situation à laquelle un esprit élevé puisse prétendre.

"After having been a distinguished minister, how many things more must be known to make a good consul! For there is no end to the variety of a consul's attributions; and they are perfectly distinct from those of the other persons employed in foreign affairs. They demand a vast amount of practical knowledge which can only be acquired by a peculiar education. Consuls are called upon to discharge, for the advantage of their countrymen, and over the extent of their jurisdiction, the functions of judges, arbitrators, and promoters of reconciliation; it frequently happens that they are employed in other civil capacities; they perform the duties of notaries, sometimes those of naval administrators; they examine and pronounce upon sanitary questions; it is they who are enabled, by their numerous professional connections, to give correct and perfect notions respecting the state of commerce or navigation, or of the manufactures peculiar to the country where they reside. Accordingly, as M. Reinhard never neglected anything which might confirm the accuracy of the information required by his government, or the justice of the decisions which he had to pronounce as a political agent, as a consular agent, or as a naval administrator, he made a profound study of international and maritime law. It was owing to this study, that he became persuaded that

"Après avoir été un ministre habile, que de choses il faut encore savoir pour un bon consul! Car les attributions d'un consul sont variées à l'infini; elles sont d'un genre tout différent de celles des autres employés des affaires étrangères. Elles exigent une foule de connaissances pratiques pour lesquelles une éducation particulière est nécessaire. Les consuls sont dans le cas d'exercer, dans l'étendue de leur arrondissement, vis-à-vis de leurs compatriotes, les fonctions de juges, d'arbitres, de conciliateurs; souvent ils sont officiers de l'état civil; ils remplissent l'emploi de notaires, quelquefois celui d'administrateur de la marine; ils surveillent et constatent l'état sanitaire; ce sont eux qui, par leurs relations habituelles, peuvent donner une idée juste et complète de la situation du commerce, de la navigation et de l'industrie particulière au pays de leur résidence. Aussi M. Reinhard, qui ne négligeait rien pour s'assurer de la justesse des informations qu'il était dans la cas de donner à son gouvernement, et des décisions qu'il devait prendre comme agent politique, comme agent consulaire, comme administrateur de la marine, avait-il fait une étude approfondie du droit des gens et du droit maritime.

the day would come when, by skilful political combinations, a universal system of commerce and navigation would be inaugurated, which would respect the interests of all nations, and be established on such foundations that war itself would be powerless to assail its principles, even were it able to suspend some of its effects.

"He had also learned to resolve, with accuracy and promptitude, every question connected with exchange, arbitration, valuation of money, weights and measures; and all this without a single dispute ever having arisen from the information he had supplied, or the judgments he had pronounced. But it is also true that the personal consideration, which accompanied him during his whole career, gave a weight to his interference, in every question that required his assistance, and in all arbitrations where he had to give a decision.

"But, however extensive may be a man's information, however vast his capacity, there is nothing so rare as a complete diplomatist. We should perhaps have found one in M. Reinhard if he had possessed but one qualification more. He observed well, and understood well; when he took up his pen, he could give an admirable account of what he had seen and heard. His written language was

Cette étude l'avait conduit à croire qu'il arriverait un temps où, par des combinaisons habilement préparées, il s'établirait un système général de commerce et de navigation, dans lequel les intérêts de toutes les nations seraient respectés, et dont les bases fussent telles que la guerre elle-même n'en pût altérer le principe, dût-elle suspendre quelques-unes de ses conséquences. Il était aussi parvenu à résoudre avec sureté et promptitude toutes les questions de change, d'arbitrage, de conversion de monnaies, de poids et mesures, et tout cela sans que jamais aucune réclamation se soit élevée contre les informations qu'il avait données et contre les jugements qu'il avait rendus. Il est vrai aussi que la considération personnelle qu'il l'a suivi dans toute sa carrière donnait du poids à son intervention dans toutes les affaires dont il se mêlait et à tous les arbitrages sur lesquels il avait à prononcer.

"Mais, quelque étendues que soient les connaissances d'un homme, quelque vaste que soit sa capacité, être un diplomate complet est bien rare ; et cependant M. Reinhard l'aurait peut-être été, s'il eut en une qualité de plus ; il voyait bien, il entendait bien ; la plume à la main, il rendait admirablement compte de le qu'il avait vu, de ce qui lui avait été dit. Sa parole écrite était abondante, facile,

ready, abundant, witty, and pointed. Thus we find that, of all the diplomatic correspondence of my time, none was preferred to that of Count Reinhard by the Emperor Napoleon, who had the right, and was under the necessity, of being difficult to please. But this eloquent writer was embarrassed when he had to speak. To carry out his intentions, his mind required more time than ordinary conversation affords. To express his thoughts with facility, it was necessary for him to be alone, and not interfered with.

"In spite of this serious difficulty, M. Reinhard always succeeded in doing, and doing well, whatever was intrusted to him. How, then, did he find the means of succeeding? whence did he derive his inspirations?

"He received them, gentlemen, from a deep and true feeling, which guided all his actions—from the sense of duty. People are not sufficiently aware of the power derived from this feeling. A life wholly devoted to duty is very easily diverted from ambition; and that of M. Reinhard was entirely taken up by his professional avocations, while he never was influenced in the slightest degree by an interested motive or a pretension to premature advancement.

"This worship of duty, to which M. Reinhard continued

spirituelle, piquante; aussi, de toutes les correspondances diplomatiques de mon temps, il n'y en avait aucune à laquelle l'empereur Napoléon, qui avait le droit et le besoin d'être difficile, ne préférat celle du comte Reinhard. Mais ce même homme qui écrivait à merveille s'exprimait avec difficulte. Pour accomplir ses actes, son intelligence demandait plus de temps qu'elle n'en pouvait obtenir dans le conversation. Pour que sa parole interne pût se reproduire facilement, il fallait qu'il fût seul et sans intermédiaire.

"Malgré cet inconvénient réel, M. Reinhard réussit toujours à faire, et bien faire, tout ce dont il était chargé. Où donc trouvait-il ses moyens de réussir, où prenait-il ses inspirations?

"Il les prenait, Messieurs, dans un sentiment vrai et profond qui gouvernait toutes ses actions, dans le sentiment du devoir. On ne sait pas assez tout ce qu'il y a de puissance dans ce sentiment. Une vie tout entière au devoir est bien aisément dégagée d'ambition. La vie de M. Reinhard était uniquement employée aux fonctions qu'il avait à remplir, sans que jamais chez lui il y eût trace de calcul personnel ni de prétention à quelque avancement précipité.

"Cette religion du devoir, à laquelle M. Reinhard fut fidèle tout sa

faithful to the end of his days, comprised entire acquiescence in the orders of his superiors—indefatigable vigilance, which, joined to much penetration, never suffered them to remain ignorant of anything which it was expedient for them to know—strict truthfulness in all his reports, however unpleasing their contents—impenetrable discretion—regular habits, which inspired esteem and confidence—a style of living suited to his position—and finally, constant attention in giving to the acts of his government the colour and lucidity which their importance demanded.

"Although age seemed to invite M. Reinhard to seek the repose of private life, he would never have asked permission to retire from active employment, so much did he fear to be thought lukewarm in the duties of a profession which had occupied the greater part of his days.

"It was necessary that his Majesty's ever-thoughtful benevolence should have providently intervened to place this great servant of France in a most honourable position, by calling him to the Chamber of Peers.

"Count Reinhard enjoyed this honour during too short a time. He died suddenly on the 25th of December, 1837.

"M. Reinhard was twice married. By his first wife he has left a son who is now following a political career. For

vie, consistait en une soumission exacte aux instructions et aux ordres de ses chefs; dans une vigilance de tous les moments, qui, jointe a beaucoup de perspicacité, ne les laissait jamais dans l'ignorance de ce qu'il leur importait de savoir; en une rigoureuse véracité dans tous ses rapports, qu'ils dussent être agréeables ou déplaisants; dans une discrétion impénétrable, dans une régularité de vie qui appelait la confiance et l'estime; dans une représentation décente, enfin dans un soin constant à donner aux actes de son gouvernement la couleur et les explications que réclamait l'intérêt des affaires qu'il avait a traiter.

"Quoique l'âge eût marqué pour M. Reinhard le temps du repos, il n'aurait jamais demandé sa retraite, tant il aurait crainte de montrer de la tiédeur a servir dans une carrière qui avait été celle de toute sa vie.

"Il a fallu que la bienveillance royale, toujours si attentive, fut prévoyante pour lui, et donnât à ce grand serviteur de la France la situation la plus honorable en l'appellant à la chambre des pairs.

"M. le comte Reinhard n'a pas joui assez longtemps de cet honneur, et il est mort presque subitement le 25 décembre, 1837.

"M. Reinhard s'était marié deux fois. Il a laissé du premier lit

the son of such a man the best wish that we can form is that he may resemble his father."

The force of nature, which a long life had exhausted in a variety of ways, seemed now unequal to any further struggle.

A disease, which at Prince Talleyrand's age was almost certain to be fatal, and which had already made its appearance, assumed a more formidable character.

An operation was advised. The prince submitted to it, and bore it with a fortitude that surprised even those who most knew the stoicism which he on all occasions affected and usually practised. Dangerous symptoms, however, soon followed, and his physician judged it an act of duty to warn him that his disorder might be fatal.

He was urged indeed to do so by the noble patient's relations, who were especially anxious that he should die in peace with the church; and when convinced that he could not recover, he assented to all that was asked of him, in this respect, as a favour that could not hurt himself, and was agreeable to those about him.

The following account of his last moments is given by a person who was present at them: "When I entered the chamber where reposed the veteran statesman, he had fallen into a profound slumber, from which some amendment was augured by his physicians. The slumber, or rather lethargy, had continued for about an hour after my arrival, when it became curious to observe the uneasiness which was manifested, as time drew on, even by those dearest and nearest, lest this repose, however salutary, should endure beyond the hour fixed for the King's visit, for the sovereign intended to pay M. de Talleyrand this last homage.

"With some difficulty he was at last aroused and made to comprehend the approaching ceremony, and hardly was he lifted from his reclining position and placed at the edge

un fils qui est aujourd'hui dans la carrière politique. Au fils d'un tel père, tout ce qu'on peut souhaiter de mieux, c'est de lui ressembler."

of the bed, when Louis Philippe, accompanied by Madame Adelaide, entered the apartment. 'I am sorry, Prince, to see you suffering so much,' said the King, in a low tremulous voice, rendered almost inaudible by apparent emotion. 'Sire, you have come to witness the sufferings of a dying man; and those who love him can have but one wish, that of seeing them shortly at an end.' This was uttered by M. de Talleyrand in that deep strong voice so peculiar to himself, and which the approach of death had not the power to weaken.

"The royal visit, like all royal visits of a disagreeable nature, was of the shortest duration possible. Indeed, the position was to all parties embarrassing and painful. Louis Philippe rose, after an effort and some few words of consolation, to take his leave; and not even at this last moment did the old prince lose his wonted presence of mind, or forget a duty which the etiquette he had been bred in dictated—that of introducing those formally to the sovereign who found themselves in his presence. Slightly raising himself, then, he mentioned by name his physician, his secretary, his principal valet, and his own private doctor, and then observed slowly: 'Sire, our house has received this day an honour worthy to be inscribed in our annals, and which my successors will remember with pride and gratitude.' It was shortly afterwards that the first symptoms of dissolution were observed, and a few persons were then admitted to his chamber; but the adjoining room was crowded, and exhibited a strange scene for a room so near the bed of death.

"The flower of the society of Paris was there. On one side old and young politicians, grey-headed statesmen, were gathered round the blazing fire, and engaged in eager conversation; on another was to be seen a coterie of younger gentlemen and ladies, whose sidelong looks and low pleasant whispers formed a sad contrast to the dying groans of the neighbouring sufferer.

"Presently, the conversation stopped; the hum of voices was at an end. There was a solemn pause, and every eye turned towards the slowly opening door of the prince's chamber. A domestic entered, with downcast looks and

swollen eyes, and advancing towards Dr. C——, who like myself had just then sought an instant's relief in the drawing-room, whispered a few words in his ear. He arose instantly, and entered the prince's chamber. The natural precipitation with which this movement was executed but too plainly revealed its cause. There was an instantaneous rush to the door of the apartment within which M. de Talleyrand was seated on the side of his bed, supported in the arms of his secretary. It was evident that Death had s t his seal upon that marble brow; yet I was struck with the still existing vigour of the countenance. It seemed as if all the life which had once sufficed to furnish the whole being was now contained in the brain. From time to time he raised up his head, throwing back with a sudden movement the long grey locks which impeded his sight, and gazed around; and then, as if satisfied with the result of his examination, a smile would pass across his features, and his head would again fall upon his bosom. He saw the approach of death without shrinking or fear, and also without any affectation of scorn or defiance.

"If there be truth in the assertion, that it is a satisfaction to die amidst friends and relations, then, indeed, must his last feeling towards the world he was for ever quitting have been one of entire approbation and content, for he expired (on the 17th of May, 1838) amidst regal pomp and reverence; and of all those whom he, perhaps, would have himself called together, none were wanting.

"The friend of his maturity, the fair young idol of his age, were gathered on bended knee beside his bed, and if the words of comfort whispered by the murmuring priest failed to reach his ear, it was because the sound was stifled by the wailings of those he had loved so well. Scarcely, however, had those eyes, whose every glance had been watched so long, and with such deep interest, for ever closed, when a sudden change came over the scene.

"One would have thought that a flight of crows had suddenly taken wing, so great was the precipitation with which each one hurried from the hotel, in the hope of being first to spread the news amongst the particular set or coterie of which he or she happened to be the oracle.

Ere nightfall, that chamber, which all the day had been crowded to excess, was abandoned to the servants of the tomb; and when I entered in the evening, I found the very arm-chair, whence I had so often heard the prince launch the courtly jest or stinging epigram, occupied by a hired priest, whispering prayers for the repose of the departed soul."

X.

M. de Talleyrand was buried at Valençay, in the chapel of the Sisters of St. André, which he had founded, and in which he had expressed a desire that the family vault should be placed.

His career and character have been gradually developed in this sketch, so that there remains little to say of them here. They were both, as I have elsewhere observed, coloured by their times, and must be regarded in connection with an epoch of social immorality and constant political change. Many of his faults were so inherent in that epoch, that, although they justly merit blame (for vice and virtue should be independent of custom and example), they also admit of excuse.

As to the variety of political parts which he played in the different scenes of the great drama which lasted half a century, one is daily seeing changes so extraordinary and so rapid amongst the most respectable public men of our own day, and even of our own country, that it would be absurd not to acknowledge that, when years run rapidly through changeful events, we must expect to find those whose career is embarked on so unsteady a current, uncertain and variable in their opinions. The stiff consistent character is of the middle ages.

At the commencement of the great Revolution of 1789, M. de Talleyrand took the liberal side in politics; a strong party of his own rank and profession did not do so, but many of the most illustrious did; and with the best motives. A certain interval elapsed; the monarchy was overthrown; a reign of madness and terror succeeded it; and, emerging from this sanguinary obscurity, men were

just beginning to adopt some principles of order, which they brought together under the name of a Republic.

It is hardly for us (who have with our own eyes seen Frenchmen of high rank and generally acknowledged honour, even the personal friends of a deposed sovereign, become, within a few days after his fall, Republicans; and within a few years the confidential leaders of another dynasty)—it is hardly for us, I say, to judge with any great severity a Frenchman, who, returning to France at the time at which M. de Talleyrand revisited it, consented to serve the Directory. Neither can we be surprised, when it appeared evident that under the Directory things were again approaching the state of terror and confusion, of which so horrible a recollection still existed, that M. de Talleyrand preferred the government of one man to the want of any government at all—the organization of society under a temporary despotism, to its utter and radical decomposition. By and by, license and disorder being vanquished, moderate and regular notions as to liberty grew up; the dictator then appeared the tyrant,—and the fortunate soldier, the military gambler after fortune. This soldier converted the nation into an army, and his army was beaten: and M. de Talleyrand aided in reviving that nation, and giving it the framework of a constitutional system, under a legitimate monarchy;—almost, in fact, that very system which thirty-five years before he had wished to see established. Years rolled on and seemed to bring with them the renewal of the old maxim, that "Restorations are impossible." The royal *émigré*, pointedly described as having forgotten nothing and learned nothing during his misfortunes, had not sufficiently imbibed the spirit of a new society which had risen up since his youth—a society which had neither the customs nor inclinations on which he considered that a monarchy should be maintained.

Charles X.'s views created suspicions which his acts, greatly exaggerated by those suspicions, hardly justified. But the knowledge that he thought that public liberty depended solely on his will, made the slightest movement towards controlling that liberty—dangerous.

The crown fell into the gutters of Paris. The government which most resembled the one which was overturned was still a monarchy with a monarch taken from the same family as the one deposed, but who was willing to accept his throne as a gift of the French nation and could not pretend to it as a legitimate right. M. de Talleyrand helped to form such a government.

It cannot be said that he departed in this case from his principles, though he changed his allegiance.

In fact, I hardly think, looking calmly and dispassionately at each of the epochs I have thus rapidly passed over, that any sensible and moderate man will deny that the side taken by M. de Talleyrand was the one on which, in every instance, lay good sense and moderation. It cannot be said that in the various changes that marked his career, he ever acted disinterestedly; but at the same time it may be urged that every time he accepted office he did thereby a real service to the cause he espoused, and even to the country to which he belonged.

There can be no doubt that at the first establishment of something like order and government under the Republic, the relations of France with foreign powers were considerably strengthened by a man of M. de Talleyrand's birth and well-known acquirements and abilities being selected as minister of foreign affairs. It is also undeniable that, during the Consulate and early part of the Empire, the experience, sagacity, and tact of the accomplished diplomatist were eminently useful to the young, half-educated, and impetuous warrior whose fiery genius had placed him at the head of the State. To Louis XVIII. M. de Talleyrand's assistance, when that sovereign recovered his throne, was invaluable, and Louis Philippe derived in no small degree, as I have already noticed, the respect which foreign governments paid so promptly to his suddenly-acquired authority from the fact that M. de Talleyrand had consented to undertake the embassy to London. I must likewise here repeat that to which I have already called attention. No party had to complain of treachery or ingratitude from this statesman so frequently stigmatised as fickle. The course he took

at the different periods of his eventful life was that which seemed natural to the position in which he found himself, and the course which both friend and foe expected from him. His defections were from those whose policy he had been previously opposing, and whose views the higher order of intellects in his country condemned at the time that his own hostility commenced. Indeed, the rule of his conduct and the cause of his success may be pretty generally found in his well-known and wise maxim, that "The thoughts of the greatest number of intelligent persons in any country, are sure, with a few more or less fluctuations to become in the end that public opinion which influences the State."

It must, however, be confessed that there is something to an honest nature displeasing in the history of a statesman who has served various masters and various systems, and appeared as the champion of each cause at the moment of its triumph. Reason may excuse, explain, or defend such versatility, but no generous sympathy calls upon us to applaud or recommend it.

The particular and especial talent of M. de Talleyrand was, as I have more than once exemplified, his tact; the art of seizing the important point in an affair—the peculiar characteristic of an individual, the genius and tendency of an epoch! His other qualities were accessories to this dominant quality, but of an inferior order and in an inferior degree.

His great good fortune was to have been absent from France during the horrors of the Committee of Public Safety; his great merit, to have served governments when in serving them he served the public interests. His great defect, a love of money, or rather a want of scruple as to how he obtained it. I never heard any clear justification of his great wealth, though that which, it is said, he gave to Bonaparte, "I bought stock before the 18th Brumaire, and sold it the day afterwards," has wit and *à propos* to recommend it. His great calamity was to have been minister of foreign affairs at the moment of the execution of the Duc d'Enghien; and the part of his conduct most difficult to explain justifiably, is to be found in the

contradiction between his declaration to Lord Grenville, when he came over to England after the 10th of August in 1792, that he had nothing to do with the provisional government then established in France, and the declaration of M. de Chénier to the convention in 1795—a declaration which he himself subsequently repeated—that he went to England at the time alluded to as Danton's agent.

An extract from the *Moniteur*, the 27th of May, 1838, page 1412, quoting from the *Gazette des Tribunaux*, is worth preserving :*

"We have already said that in the sequel to the will of Prince Talleyrand was found a sort of manifesto, in which the celebrated diplomatist asserted the principles which had guided him in his political life, and explained his way of looking at certain events.

"According to various facts we have collected, the following is the substance of that declaration, which is dated in 1836, and which, in accordance with the wish of the testator, has been read to the family and assembled friends.

"The prince declares that before all things, and to all things, he had preferred the true interests of France.

"Explaining himself on the part he had taken in the return of the Bourbons in 1814, he says that, in his opinion, the Bourbons did not re-ascend the throne in virtue of a pre-existing and hereditary right; and he gives us, moreover, to understand that his counsels and

* "Nous avons dit qu'à la suite du testament du prince de Talleyrand se trouvait une sorte de manifeste, dans lequel le célèbre diplomate exposait les principes qui l'avaient guidé dans sa vie politique, et exprimait sa manière de voir à l'égard de certains événements.

"Voici, d'après les renseignements que nous avons recueillis, ce que contient en substance cette déclaration, qui porte la date de 1836, et qui, conformément au vœu du testateur, a été lui à la famille et à ses amis assemblés.

"Le prince déclare qu'avant tout et à tout, il a préféré les vrais intérêts de la France.

"S'expliquant sur la part qu'il a prise à la rentrée des Bourbons en 1814, il dit que, dans son opinion, les Bourbons ne remontaient pas sur le trône en vertu d'un droit héréditaire, et pré-existant, et il

advice were never wanting to enlighten them on their true position, and on the conduct which they ought to have followed in consequence.

"He repels the reproach of having betrayed Napoleon; if he abandoned him, it was when he discovered that he could no longer blend, as he had up to that time done, France and the Emperor in the same affection. *This was not without a lively feeling of sorrow, for he owed to Napoleon nearly all his fortune. He enjoins his heirs never to forget these obligations, to tell them to their children, and to instruct these, again, to tell them to their offspring; so that if some day a man of the name of Bonaparte should be found in want of assistance, he should always find it in the family of Talleyrand.*

"Replying to those who reproached him for having served successively all governments, he observes that he had done so without the least scruple, guided by the idea that, in whatever situation the country might be, there were always means of doing it some good, and that to do this good was the business of a statesman."

Supposing the testament thus spoken of to exist, it is curious; and the expression of gratitude to the Bonaparte family is the more creditable from the fact that it could

donne même à entendre que ses conseils et ses avis ne leur manquèrent pas pour les éclairer sur leur vraie position, et sur la conduite qu'ils devaient tenir en conséquence.

"Il repousse le reproche d'avoir trahi Napoléon : s'il l'a abandonné, c'est lorsqu'il reconnut qu'il ne pouvait plus confondre, comme il l'avait fait jusqu'alors, la France et l'Empereur dans une même affection ; ce ne fut pas sans un vif sentiment de douleur, car il lui devait à peu près toute sa fortune ; il engage ses héritiers à ne jamais l'oublier, à le répéter à leurs enfants, et ceux-ci à ceux qui naîtront d'eux, afin, dit-il, que si quelque jour un homme du nom de Bonaparte se trouvait dans le besoin, ils s'empressassent de lui donner aide, secours et assistance.

"Répondant à ceux qui lui reprochent d'avoir servi successivement tous les gouvernements, il déclare qu'il ne s'en est fait aucun scrupule, et qu'il a agi ainsi, guidé par cette pensée que, dans quelque situation que fût un pays, il y avait toujours moyen de lui faire du bien, et que c'était à opérer ce bien que devait s'appliquer un homme d'état."

not have been made with any idea that it would be rewarded.

As to the defence set up for serving all dynasties and all causes, it cannot apply to any country where public men have the power, out of office, to put down a bad government, as they have in office the power to uphold a good one.

I will conclude with the appreciation of a French friend, who thus summed up many of my own remarks :—

"Enfin, chez M. de Talleyrand, l'aménité et la raison remplaçaient le cœur, et la conscience. Avec bien des défauts qui ont terni sa réputation, il avait toutes les qualités qui devaient faire prospérer son ambition. Ses talents qu'il a employés constamment pour son propre avantage, il les a employés presque aussi constamment pour le bien public. Beaucoup attaqué et peu défendu par ses contemporains, il n'en restera pas moins pour la postérité un des hommes les plus aimables de son temps et un des citoyens les plus illustres de son pays."

MACKINTOSH,

THE MAN OF PROMISE.

Part I.

FROM HIS YOUTH TO HIS APPOINTMENT IN INDIA.

Mackintosh's character.—Character of men of his type.—Birth and parentage.—Starts as a physician, fails, and becomes a newspaper writer, and author of a celebrated pamphlet in answer to Burke's "Thoughts on the French Revolution."—Studies for the bar.—Becomes noted as a public character, violent on the Liberal side.—Becomes acquainted with Mr. Burke.—Modifies his opinions.—Gives lectures on public law, remarkable for their eloquence and their Conservative opinions.—Becomes the advocate of Peltier; makes a great speech, and shortly afterwards accepts an appointment in India.

I.

I STILL remember, amongst the memorable events of my early youth, an invitation to meet Sir James Mackintosh at dinner; and the eager and respectful attention with which this honoured guest was received. I still remember also my anxiety to learn the especial talents, or remarkable works, for which Sir James was distinguished, and the unsatisfactory replies which all my questions elicited. He was a writer, but many had written better; he was a speaker, but many had spoken better; he was a philosopher, but many had done far more for philosophy; and yet, though it was difficult to fix on any one thing in which he was first-rate, it was generally maintained that he was a first-rate man. There is, indeed, a class amongst mankind, a body numerous in all literary societies, who are far less valued for any precise thing they have done than according to a vague notion of what they are capable

of doing. Mackintosh may be taken as a type of this class; not that he passed his life in the learned inactivity to which the resident members of our own universities sometimes consign their intellectual powers, but which more frequently characterizes the tranquil scholars, whose erudition is the boast of some small German or Italian city.

But though mixing in the action of a great and stirring community, a lawyer, an author, a member of parliament, Mackintosh never arrived at the eminence in law, in letters, or in politics, that satisfied the expectations of those who, living in his society, were impressed by his intellect and astonished at his acquirements.

If I were to sum up in a few words the characteristics of the persons who thus promise more than they ever perform, I should say that their powers of comprehension are greater than their powers either of creation or exposition; and that their energy, though capable of being roused occasionally to great exertions, can rarely be relied on for any continued effort.

They collect, sometimes in rather a sauntering manner, an immense store of varied information. But it is only by fits and starts that they are able to use it with effect, and at their happiest moments they rarely attain the simple grace and the natural vigour which give beauty and life to composition. Their deficiencies are inherent in their nature, and are never therefore entirely overcome. They have not in their minds the immortal spark of genius, but the faculty of comprehending genius may give them, in a certain degree, the power of imitating it; whilst ambition, interest, and necessity, will at times stimulate them to extraordinary exertions. As writers, they usually want originality, ease, and power; as men of action, tact, firmness, and decision. The works in which they most succeed are usually short, and written under temporary excitement; as statesmen, they at times attract attention and win applause, but rarely obtain authority or take and keep the lead in public affairs. In society, however, the mere faculty of remembering and comprehending a variety of things is quite sufficient to obtain a consider-

able reputation; whilst the world, when indulgent, often estimates the power of a man's abilities by some transient and ephemeral display of them.

I will now turn from these general observations to see how far they are exemplified in the history of the person whose name is before me; a person who advanced to the very frontier of those lands which it was not given to him to enter; and who is not only a favourable specimen of his class, but who, as belonging to that class, represents in many respects a great portion of the public during that memorable period of our annals, which extends from the French Revolution of 1789 to the English Reform Bill in 1830.

II.

The father of Sir James was a Scotch country gentleman, who, having a small hereditary property, which he could neither part with nor live upon, entered the army early, and passed his life almost entirely with his regiment. Young Mackintosh was born on the 24th of October, 1765, in the county of Inverness, and was sent as soon as he could be to a school at Fortrose; where he fell in with two books which had a permanent influence on his future career. These books were "Plutarch's Lives" and the "Roman History," books which, by making him ambitious of public honours, rendered his existence a perpetual struggle between that which he desired to be and that for which he was best suited. At Aberdeen, then, where he was sent on quitting Fortrose, he was alike remarkable for his zeal in politics, and his love for metaphysics—that is, for his alternate coquetry between an active and a meditative life. At Edinburgh, also, where he subsequently went to study medicine, it was the same thing. In the evening he would go now and then to a "spouting" club and make speeches, while the greater part of his mornings was spent in poetical lucubrations. To the medical profession he paid little attention, till all of a sudden necessity aroused him. He then applied himself, with a start, to that which he was obliged to know; but his diligence was not of that resolute and steady kind which insures success as the consequence of a certain

period of application; and after rushing into the novelties of the Brunonian System,* which promised knowledge with little labour, and then, rushing back again, he resolved on taking his countrymen's short road to fortune, and set out for England. His journey, however, did not answer. He got a wife, but no patients; and on the failure of his attempts to establish himself at Salisbury and at Weymouth, retired to Brussels—ill, wearied, and disgusted. The Low Countries were at that time the theatre of a struggle between the Emperor Joseph and his subjects; the general convulsion which shortly afterwards took place throughout Europe was preparing, and the agitation of men's minds was excessive. These exciting scenes called the disappointed physician back to the more alluring study of politics; and to this short visit to the Continent he owed a knowledge of its opinions and its public men, which first served him as the correspondent of a newspaper, *The Oracle*; and, subsequently, furnished him with materials for a pamphlet which in an instant placed him in the situation he so long occupied as one of *the most promising men of his day*. This celebrated pamphlet, published in 1791, and known under the name of "Vindiciæ Gallicæ," whether we consider the circumstances under which it appeared, the opponent whom it combated, or the ability of the composition itself, merited all the attention it received, and was the more successful because it gave just the answer to Burke which Burke himself would have given to his own Reflections.

Thus, the club of Saint James', the cloister of Trinity

* *Brunonian System.*—Medical doctrines first broached by Dr. John Brown, in his "Elementæ Medicinæ," in 1780. He imagined that the body was endowed with a certain quantity of *excitability*, and that every external agent acted as a *stimulant* on this property of excitability. Health consisted in a just proportion of stimulation, but when this was carried too far, exhaustion, or *direct debility*, was the consequence, and when not far enough, *indirect debility*. The diseases which he supposed to arise from one or other of those two states were classed into two orders, the *sthenic* and the *asthenic*. Brown was considered no great prophet in his own country, but he exercised considerable influence on the medical doctrines of the Italian schools, which to this day are somewhat tinctured with Brunonianism.

College, had a writer to quote, whose sentiments were in favour of liberty, and whose language, agreeable to the ear of the gentleman and the scholar, did not, in defending the patriots of France, advise their imitation or approve their excesses.

"Burke," he says, "admires the Revolution of 1688; but we, who conceive that we pay the purest homage to the authors of that Revolution, not in contending for what they then did, but for what they would now do, can feel no inconsistency in looking on France—not to model our conduct, but to invigorate the spirit of freedom. We permit ourselves to imagine how Lord Somers, in the light and knowledge of the eighteenth century, how the patriots of France, in the tranquillity and opulence of England, would have acted.

"We are not bound to copy the conduct to which the last were driven by a bankrupt exchequer, and a dissolved government; nor to maintain the establishments which were spared by the first in a prejudiced and benighted age.

"Exact imitation is not necessary to reverence. We venerate the principles which presided in both, and we adapt to political admiration a maxim which has long been received in polite letters, that the only manly and liberal imitation is to speak as a great man would have spoken, had he lived in our times, and been placed in our circumstances."

There is much even in this passage to show that the adversary was still the imitator, imbued with the spirit and under the influence of the genius of the very writer whom he was bold enough to attack. Many, nevertheless, who, taken by surprise, had surrendered to the magisterial eloquence of the master, were rescued by the elegant pleading of the scholar. Everywhere, then, might be heard the loudest applause, and an applause well merited. On the greatest question of the times, the first man of the times had been answered by a young gentleman aged twenty-six, and who, hitherto unknown, was appreciated by his first success.

The leaders of the Whig party sought him out; they paid him every attention. His opinions went further than theirs; for he was an advocate of universal suffrage,

an abolitionist of all titles, an enemy to a senate or second assembly. No persons practically contending for power could say they exactly sanctioned such notions as these; but all praised the style in which they were put forth, and, allowing for the youth, lauded the talent, of the author. Indeed, "the love to hatred turned" ever repudiates moderation, and the antagonist of Burke was certain of the rapturous cheers of those whom that great but passionate man had deserted. In this manner Mackintosh (who was now preparing for the bar) became necessarily a party man, and a violent party man. Mr. Fox praised his abilities in Parliament; the famous Reform Association called the "Friends of the People" chose him for their honorary secretary. A great portion of the well-known declaration of this society was his composition; and in a letter to the Prime Minister of the day (Mr. Pitt), he abused that statesman with a fierceness and boldness of invective which even political controversy scarcely allowed.

Here was the great misfortune of his life. This fierceness and boldness were not in his nature; in becoming a man of action, he entered upon a part which was not suited to his character, and which it was certain therefore he would not sustain. The reaction soon followed. Amongst its first symptoms was a review of Mr. Burke's "Regicide Peace." The author of the review became known to the person whose writing was criticised: a correspondence ensued, very flattering to Mr. Mackintosh, who shortly afterwards spent a few days at Beaconsfield (1796).

It was usual for him to say, referring to this visit, that in half an hour Mr. Burke overturned the previous reflections of his whole life. There was some exaggeration, doubtless, in this assertion, but it is also likely that there was some truth in it. His opinions had begun to waver, and at that critical moment he came into personal contact with, and was flattered by, a man whom every one praised, and who praised few. At all events, he was converted, and not ashamed of his conversion, but, on the contrary, mounted with confidence a stage on which his change might be boldly justified.

The faults as well as the excellences of the English

character arise from that great dislike to generalise which has made us the practical, and in many instances the prejudiced, people that we are. Abroad, a knowledge of general or natural law, of the foundations on which all laws are or ought to be based, enters as a matter of course into a liberal education. In England lawyers themselves disregard this study as useless or worse than useless.* They look, and they look diligently, into English law, such as it is, established by custom, precedent, or act of Parliament. They know all the nice points and proud formalities on which legal justice rests, or by which it may be eluded. The conflicting cases and opposing opinions, which may be brought to bear on an unsound horse, or a contested footpath, are deeply pondered over, carefully investigated. But the great edifice of general jurisprudence, though standing on his wayside, is usually passed by the legal traveller with averted eyes: the antiquary and the philosopher, indeed, may linger there; but the plodding man of business scorns to arrest his steps.

When, however, amidst the mighty crash of states and doctrines that followed the storm of 1791—when, amidst the birth of new empires and new legislatures, custom lost its sanctity, precedent its authority, and statute was made referable to common justice and common sense,—then, indeed, there uprose a strong and earnest desire to become acquainted with those general principles so often cited by the opponents of the past; to visit that armoury in which such terrible weapons had been found, and to see whether it could not afford means as powerful for defending what remained as it had furnished for destroying what had already been swept away.

III.

A course of Lectures on Public Law—about which the public knew so little, and were yet so curious—offered a road to distinction, which the young lawyer, confident in his own abilities and researches, had every temptation to tread. Private interest procured him the Hall at Lincoln's

* It is fair to observe that this prejudice is gradually disappearing.

Inn; but this was not sufficient; it was necessary that he should make the world aware of the talent, the knowledge, and the sentiments with which he undertook so great a task. He published his introductory essay—the only memorable record of the Lectures to which we are referring that now remains. The views contained in this essay may in many instances be erroneous; but its merits as a composition are of no common kind. Learned, eloquent, it excited nearly as much enthusiasm as the "Vindiciæ Gallicæ," and deserved, upon the whole, a higher order of admiration.

But praise came this time from a different quarter. A few years before, and Mackintosh had spoken of Mr. Pitt as cold, stern, crafty, and ambitious; possessing "the parade without the restraint of morals;" the "most profound dissimulation with the utmost ardour of enterprise; prepared by one part of his character for the violence of a multitude, by another for the duplicity of a court."*

It was under the patronage of this same Mr. Pitt that the hardy innovator now turned back to "the old ways," proclaiming that "history was a vast museum, in which specimens of every variety of human nature might be studied. From these great occasions to knowledge," he said, "lawgivers and statesmen, but more especially moralists and political philosophers, may reap the most important instruction. There, they may plainly discover, amid all the useful and beautiful variety of governments and institutions, and under all the fantastic multitude of usages and rites which ever prevailed among men, the same fundamental, comprehensive truths—truths which have ever been the guardians of society, recognised and revered (with very few and slight exceptions) by every nation upon earth, and uniformly taught, with still fewer exceptions, by a succession of wise men, from the first dawn of speculation down to the latest times."

"See," he continued, "whether from the remotest periods any improvement, or even any change, has been made in the practical rules of human conduct. Look at the code of Moses. I speak of it now as a mere human com-

* Letter to Mr. Pitt.

position, without considering its sacred origin. Considering it merely in that light, it is the most ancient and the most curious memorial of the early history of mankind. More than 3000 years have elapsed since the composition of the Pentateuch; and let any man, if he is able, tell me in what important respects the rule of life has varied since that distant period. Let the institutes of Menu be explored with the same view; we shall arrive at the same conclusion. Let the books of false religion be opened; it will be found that their moral system is, in all its good features, the same. The impostors who composed them were compelled to pay this homage to the uniform moral sentiments of the world. Examine the codes of nations, those authentic depositories of the moral judgments of men: you everywhere find the same rules prescribed, the same duties imposed. Even the boldest of these ingenious sceptics who have attacked every other opinion, have spared the sacred and immortal simplicity of the rules of life. In our common duties, Bayle and Hume agree with Bossuet and Barrow. Such as the rule was at the first dawn of history, such it continues at the present day. Ages roll over mankind; mighty nations pass away like a shadow; virtue alone remains the same, immutable and unchangeable."

The object of Mackintosh was to show that the instinct of man was towards society; that society could not be kept together except on certain principles; that these principles, therefore, from the nature of man—a nature predestined and fashioned by God—were at once universal and divine, and that societies would perish that ignored them;—a true and sublime theory; but with respect to which we must, if we desire to be practical, admit that variety of qualifications which different civilizations, different climates, accidental interests, and religious prescriptions interpose.

It may be said, for instance, that no society could exist if its institutions honoured theft as a virtue, and instructed parents to murder their children; but a great and celebrated society did exist in ancient Greece,—a society which outlived its brilliant contemporaries, and which

sanctioned robbery, if not detected; and allowed parents to kill their children, if sickly. It is perfectly true that the ten commandments of the Jewish legislator are applicable to all mankind, and are as much revered by the people of the civilized world at the present day, as by the semi-barbarous people of Israel 3000 years ago. They are admitted as integrally into the religion taught by Christ, as they were into the religion taught by Moses. But how different the morality founded on them! How different the doctrine of charity and forgiveness from the retributive prescription of vindicative justice! Nay, how different the precepts taught by the various followers of Christ themselves, who draw those precepts from the same book!

If there is anything on which it is necessary for the interest and happiness of mankind to constitute a fixed principle of custom or of law, it is the position of woman. The social relationship of man with woman rules the destiny of both from the cradle to the grave; and yet, on this same relationship, what various notions, customs, and laws!

I make these observations, because it is well that we should see how much is left to the liberty of man, whilst we recognise the certain rules by which his caprice is limited: how much is to be learned from the past—how much is left open to the future!

But all argument at the time that Mackintosh opened his lectures consisted in the opposition of extremes. As the one party decried history altogether, so the other referred everything to history; as the former sect declared that no reverence was due to custom, so the latter announced that all upon which we valued ourselves most was traditional. Because those fanatics scoffed at the ideas and manners of the century that had just elapsed, these referred with exultation to the manners and ideas that prevailed some thousands of years before.

Mackintosh stood forth, confessedly, as History's champion; and with the beautiful candour, which marked his modest and elevated frame of mind, confessed that the sight of those who surrounded his chair—the opinions he

knew them to entertain—the longing after applause, for which every public speaker, whatever his theme, naturally thirsts—and also, he adds, "a proper repentance for former errors"—might all have heightened the qualities of the orator to the detriment of the lecturer, and carried him, "in the rebound from his original opinions, too far towards the opposite extreme."*

IV.

We shall soon have to inquire what were the real nature and character of the change which he confessed that his language at this time exaggerated. Suffice it here to say that, amidst the sighs of his old friends, the applauses of his new, and the sneering murmurs and scornful remarks of the stupid and the envious of all parties, his eloquence (for he was eloquent as a professor) produced generally the most flattering effects. Statesmen, lawyers, men of letters, idlers, crowded with equal admiration round the amusing moralist, whose glittering store of knowledge was collected from the philosopher, the poet, the writer of romance and history.

"In mixing up the sparking julep," says an eloquent though somewhat affected writer, "that by its potent application was to scour away the drugs and feculence and peccant humours of the body politic, he (Mackintosh) seemed to stand with his back to the drawers in a metaphysical dispensary, and to take out of them whatever ingredients suited his purpose."†

In the meanwhile (having lost his first wife and married again) he pursued his professional course, though without doing anything as an advocate equal to his success as a professor.

M. Peltier's trial, however, now took place. M. Peltier was an *émigré*, whom the neighbouring revolution had driven to our shores; a gentleman possessing some ability, and ardently attached to the royal cause.

He had not profited by the permission to return to

* Letters to Mr. Sharpe. See "Life of Sir James Mackintosh," by his Son.

† Hazlitt.

France, which had been given to all French exiles, but carried on a French journal, which, finding its way to the Continent, excited the remarkable susceptibility of the first consul. This was just after the peace of Amiens. Urged by the French government, our own undertook the prosecution of M. Peltier's paper. The occasion was an ode, in which the apotheosis of Bonaparte was referred to, and his assassination pretty plainly advocated. So atrocious a suggestion, however veiled, or however provoked, merited, no doubt, the reprobation of all worthy and high-minded men; but party spirit and national rancour ran high, and the defender of the prosecuted journalist was sure to stand before his country as the enemy of France and the advocate of freedom.

A variety of circumstances pointed out Mr. Mackintosh as the proper counsel to place in this position; and here, by a singular fortune, he was enabled to combine a hatred to revolutionary principles with an ardent admiration of that ancient spirit of liberty, which is embodied in the most popular institutions of England.

"Circumstanced as my client is," he exclaimed, in his rather studied but yet powerful declamation, "the most refreshing object his eye can rest upon is an English jury; and he feels with me gratitude to the Ruler of empires, that after the wreck of everything else ancient and venerable in Europe, of all established forms and acknowledged principles, of all long-subsisting laws and sacred institutions, we are met here, administering justice after the manner of our forefathers in this her ancient sanctuary. Here these parties come to judgment; one, the master of the greatest empire on the earth; the other, a weak, defenceless fugitive, who waives his privilege of having half his jury composed of foreigners, and puts himself with confidence on a jury entirely English. Gentlemen, there is another view in which this case is highly interesting, important, and momentous, and I confess I am animated to every exertion that I can make, not more by a sense of my duty to my client, than by a persuasion that this cause is the first of a series of contests with the 'freedom of the press.' My learned friend, Mr. Perceval, I am sure, will never

disgrace his magistracy by being instrumental to a measure so calamitous. But viewing this as I do, as the first of a series of contests between the greatest power on earth and the only press that is now free, I cannot help calling upon him and you to pause, before the great earthquake swallows up all the freedom that remains among men; for though no indication has yet been made to attack the freedom of the press in this country, yet the many other countries that have been deprived of this benefit must forcibly impress us with the propriety of looking vigilantly to ourselves. Holland and Switzerland are now no more, and near fifty of the imperial crowns in Germany have vanished since the commencement of this prosecution. All these being gone, there is no longer any control but what this country affords. Every press on the Continent, from Palermo to Hamburg, is enslaved; one place alone remains where the press is free, protected by our government and our patriotism. It is an awfully proud consideration that that venerable fabric, raised by our ancestors, still stands unshaken amidst the ruins that surround us. *You are the advanced guard of liberty,*" &c.

After the delivery of this speech, which, after being translated by Madame de Staël, was read with admiration not only in England, but also on the Continent, Mr. Mackintosh, though he lost his cause, was considered no less promising as a pleader, than after the publication of the "Vindiciæ Gallicæ" he had been considered as a pamphleteer. In both instances, however, the sort of effort he had made seemed to have exhausted him, and three months had not elapsed, when, with the plaudits of the public, and the praise of Erskine, still ringing in his ears, he accepted the Recordership of Bombay from Mr. Addington, and retired with satisfaction to the well-paid and knighted indolence of India. His objects in so doing were, he said, to make a fortune, and to write a work.

We shall thoroughly understand the man when we see what he achieved towards the attainment of these two objects. He did not make a fortune; he did not write a work. The greater part of his time seems to have been employed in a restless longing after society, and a perpetual

dawdling over books; during the seven years he was absent, he speaks continually of his projected work as "always to be projected." "I observe," he says, in one of his letters to Mr. Sharpe, "that you touch me once or twice with the spur about my books on Morals. I felt it gall me, for I have not begun."

Part II.

HIS STAY IN INDIA AND HIS CAREER IN PARLIAMENT.

Goes to India.—Pursuits there.—Returns home dissatisfied with himself.—Enters Parliament on the Liberal side.—Reasons why he took it.—Fails in first speech.—Merits as an orator.—Extracts from his speeches.—Modern ideas.—Excessive punishments.—Mackintosh's success as a law reformer.—General parliamentary career.

I.

Sir James Mackintosh, in accepting a place in India, abdicated the chances of a brilliant and useful career in England; still his presence in one of our great dependencies was not without its use—for his literary reputation offered him facilities in the encouragement of learned and scientific pursuits—which, when they tend to explore and illustrate the history and resources of a new empire, are, in fact, political ones; while his attempts to obtain a statistical survey, as well as to form different societies, the objects of which were the acquirement and communication of knowledge, though not immediately successful, did not fail to arouse in Bombay, and to spread much farther, a different and a far more enlightened spirit than that which had hitherto prevailed amongst our speculating settlers, or rather sojourners in the East. The mildness of his judicial sway, moreover, and a wish to return to Europe with, if possible, a "bloodless ermine,"* contributed not only to extend the views, but to soften the manners of the merchant conquerors, and to lay thereby something like a practical foundation for subsequent legislative improvement.

To himself, however, this distant scene seems to have

* He only sanctioned one execution.

possessed no interest, to have procured no advantage. Worn by the climate, wearied by a series of those small duties and trifling exertions which, unattended by fame, offer none of that moral excitement which overcomes physical fatigue; but little wealthier than when he undertook his voyage, having accomplished none of those works, and enjoyed little of that ease, the visions of which cheered him in undertaking it; a sick, a sad, and, so far as the acceptance of his judgeship was concerned, a repentant man, he (in 1810) took his way homewards.

"It has happened," he observes in one of his letters—"it has happened by the merest accident that the 'trial of Peltier' is among the books in the cabin; and when I recollect the way in which you saw me opposed to Perceval on the 21st of February, 1803 (the day of the trial), and that I compare his present situation—whether at the head of an administration or an opposition—with mine, scanty as my stock is of fortune, health, and spirits, in a cabin nine feet square, on the Indian Ocean, I think it enough that I am free from the soreness of disappointment."

There is, indeed, something melancholy in the contrast thus offered between a man still young, hopeful, rising high in the most exciting profession, just crowned with the honours of forensic triumph, and the man prematurely old, who in seven short years had become broken, dispirited, and was now under the necessity of beginning life anew, with wasted energies and baffled aspirations.

But Sir James Mackintosh deceived himself in thinking that if the seven years to which he alludes had been passed in England, they would have placed him in the same position as that to which Mr. Perceval had ascended within the same period. Had he remained at the bar, or entered Parliament instead of going to India, he might, indeed, have made several better speeches than Mr. Perceval, as he had already made one; but he would not always have been speaking well, like Mr. Perceval, nor have pushed himself forward in those situations, and at those opportunities, when a good speech would have been most wanted or most effective. At all events, his talents for active life were about to have a tardy trial; the object of

his early dreams and hopes was about to be attained—a seat the in House of Commons. He took his place amongst the members of the Liberal opposition; and many who remembered the auspices under which he left England, were somewhat surprised at the banner under which he now enlisted.

II.

Here is the place at which it may be most convenient to consider Sir James Mackintosh's former change; as well as the circumstances which led him back to his old connections. He had entered life violently democratical,—a strong upholder of the French Revolution; he became, so to speak, violently moderate, and a strong opponent of this same Revolution. He altered his politics, and this alteration was followed by his receiving an appointment.

Such is the outline which malignity might fill up with the darkest colours; but it would be unjustly. The machinery of human conduct is complex; and it would be absurd to say that a man's interests are not likely to have an influence on his actions. But they who see more of our nature than the surface, know that our interests are quite as frequently governed by our character as our character is by our interests. The true explanation, then, of Mackintosh's conduct is to be found in his order of intellect. His mind was not a mind led by its own inspirations, but rather a mind reflecting the ideas of other men, and of that class of men more especially to which he, as studious and speculative, belonged. The commencement of the French Revolution, the long-prepared work of the Encyclopedists, was hailed by such persons (we speak generally) as a sort of individual success. Burke did much to check this feeling; and subsequent events favoured Burke. But by far the greater number of those addicted to literary pursuits sympathized with the popular party in the States-General. Under this impulse the "Vindiciæ Gallicæ" was written. The exclusion of the eminent men of the National Assembly from power modified, the execution of the Girondists subdued, this impulse. At the fall of those eloquent Republicans the

lettered usurpation ceased; and now literature, instead of being opposed to royalty, owed, like it, a debt of vengeance to that inexorable mob which had spared neither.

It was at the time, then, when everybody was recanting that Mackintosh made *his* recantation. Most men of his class and nature took the same part in the same events; for such men were delighted with the theories of freedom, but shocked at its excesses; and, indeed, it is difficult to conceive anything more abhorrent to the gentle dreams of a civilised philosophy than that wild hurricane of liberty which carried ruin and desolation over France in the same blast that spread the seeds of future prosperity.

We find, it is true, this beautiful passage in the "Vindiciæ Gallicæ:" "The soil of Attica was remarked by antiquity as producing at once the most delicious fruits and the most violent poisons. It is thus with the human mind; and to the frequency of convulsions in the commonwealths we owe those examples of sanguinary tumult and virtuous heroism which distinguish their history from the monotonous tranquillity of modern states." But though these words were used by Mackintosh, they were merely transcribed by him; they belong to a deeper and more daring genius—they are almost literally the words of Machiavel, and were furnished by the reading, and not by the genuine reflections, of the youthful pamphleteer. He had not in rejoicing over the work of the Constituante anticipated the horrors of the Convention; the regret, therefore, that he expressed for what he condemned as his early want of judgment, was undoubtedly sincere; and no one can fairly blame him for accepting, under such circumstances, a post which was not political, and which removed him from the angry arena in which he would have had to combat with former friends, whose rancour may be appreciated by Dr. Parr's brutal reply—when Mackintosh asked him, how Quigley, an Irish priest, executed for treason, could have been worse. "I'll tell you, Jemmy—Quigley was an Irishman, he might have been a Scotchman; he was a priest, he might have been a lawyer; he was a traitor, he might have been an apostate."

Thus much for the Bombay Recordership. But the feverish panic which the sanguinary government of Robespierre had produced—calmed by his fall, soothed by the feeble government which succeeded him, and replaced at last by the stern domination of a warrior who had at least the merit of restoring order and tranquillity to his country—died away.

A variety of circumstances—including the publication of the "Edinburgh Review," which, conducted in a liberal and moderate spirit, made upon the better educated class of the British population a considerable impression—favoured and aided the reaction towards a more temperate state of thought. A new era began, in which the timid lost their fears, the factious their hopes. All question of the overthrow of the constitution and of the confiscation of property was at an end; and as politics thus fell back into more quiet channels, parties adopted new watchwords and new devices. The cry was no longer, "Shall there be a Monarchy or a Republic?" but, "Shall the Catholics continue proscribed as helots, or shall they be treated as free men?"

During the seven years which Sir James had passed in India, this was the turn that had been taking place in affairs and opinions. It is hardly possible to conceive any change more calculated to carry along with it a mild and intelligent philosopher, to whom fanaticism of all kinds was hateful.

Those whom he had left, under the standard of Mr. Pitt, contending against anarchical doctrines and universal conquest, were now for disputing one of Mr. Pitt's most sacred promises, and refusing to secure peace to an empire, at the very crisis of its fortunes, by the establishment of a system of civil equality between citizens who thought differently on the somewhat abstruse subject of transubstantiation. Mr. Perceval, at the head of this section of politicians, was separated from almost every statesman who possessed any reputation as a scholar. Mr. Canning did not belong to his administration; Lord Wellesley was on the point of quitting it. There never was a government to which what may be called the thinking

class of the country stood so opposed. Thus, the very same sort of disposition which had detached Sir James Mackintosh, some years ago, from his early friends, was now disposing him to rejoin them; and he moved backwards and forwards, I must repeat, in both instances—when he went to India a Tory,* and when he entered Parliament a Whig—with a considerable body of persons, who, though less remarked because less distinguished, honestly pursued the same conduct.

All the circumstances, indeed, which marked his conduct at this time do him honour. Almost immediately on his return to England, the premier offered him a seat in Parliament, and held out to him the hopes of the high and lucrative situation of President of the Board of Control. A poor man, and an ambitious man, equally anxious for place and distinction, he refused both; and this refusal, of which we have now the surest proof, was a worthy answer to the imputations which had attended the acceptance of his former appointment. Lord Abinger, who has since recorded the refusal of a seat from Mr. Perceval, was himself the bearer of a similar offer from Lord Cawdor;† and under the patronage of this latter nobleman Sir James Mackintosh first entered Parliament (1813) as the Member for Nairnshire, a representation the more agreeable, since it was that of his ancestral county, wherein he had inherited the small property which some years before he had been compelled to part with.‡

III.

Any man entering the House of Commons for the first time late in life possesses but a small chance of attaining considerable parliamentary eminence. It requires some time to seize the spirit of that singular assembly, of which most novices are at first inclined to over-rate and then to under-rate the judgment.

* He would perhaps have repudiated this name; but, as far as opinions gave the title, it certainly at this time belonged to him.

† See "Life of Sir James Mackintosh," by his Son, pp. 246 and 279.

‡ Subsequently he sat for Knaresborough, under the patronage of the Duke of Devonshire.

A learned man is more likely to be wrong than any other. He fancies himself amidst an assembly of meditative and philosophic statesmen; he calls up all his deepest thoughts and most refined speculations; he is anxious to astonish by the profundity and extent of his views, the novelty and sublimity of his conceptions; as he commences, the listeners are convinced he is a bore, and before he concludes, he is satisfied that they are blockheads.

The orator, however, is far more out in his conjectures than the audience. The House of Commons consists of a mob of gentlemen, the greater part of whom are neither without talent nor information. But a mob of well-informed gentlemen is still a mob, requiring to be amused rather than instructed, and only touched by those reasons and expressions which, clear to the dullest as to the quickest intellect, vibrate through an assembly as if it had but one ear and one mind.

Besides, the House of Commons is a mob divided beneficially, though it requires some knowledge of the general genius and practical bearings of a representative government to see all the advantages of such a division, into parties. What such parties value is that which is done in their ranks, that which is useful to themselves, of advantage to a common cause; any mere personal exhibition is almost certain to be regarded by them with contempt or displeasure. Differing amongst themselves, indeed, in almost everything else—some being silent and fastidious, some bustling and loquacious, some indolent and looking after amusement, some incapable of being and yet desiring to appear to be men of business, some active, public-spirited, and ambitious—all agree in detecting the philosophic rhetorician. Anything in the shape of subtle refinement,—anything that borders on learned generalities, is sure to be out of place. Even supposing that the new member, already distinguished elsewhere although now at his maiden essay in this strange arena, has sufficient tact to see the errors into which he is likely to fall, he is still a suspected person, and will be narrowly watched as to any design of parading his own acquirements at the expense of other people's patience.

How did Sir J. Mackintosh first appear amongst auditors thus disposed? Lord Castlereagh moved, on the 20th of December, 1814, for an adjournment to the 1st of March. At that moment the whole of Europe was pouring, in the full tide of victory, into France. Every heart thrilled with recent triumph and the anticipation of more complete success. The ministry had acquired popularity as the reflection of the talents of their general and the tardy good fortune of their allies. The demand for adjournment was the demand for a confidence which they had a right to expect, and which Mr. Whitbread and the leading Whigs saw it would be ungenerous and impolitic to refuse. They granted then what was asked; Mackintosh alone opposed it. His opposition was isolated, certain to be without any practical result, and could only be accounted for by the desire to make a speech!

Lord Castlereagh, who was by nature the man of action which Mackintosh was not, saw at once the error which the new Whig member had committed, and determined to add as much as possible to his difficulties. Instead, therefore, of making the statement which he knew was expected from him, and to which he presumed the orator opposite would affect to reply, he merely moved for the adjournment as a matter of course, which needed no justification. By this simple manœuvre all the formidable artillery which the profound reflector on foreign politics and the eloquent lecturer on the law of nations had brought into the field, was rendered useless. A fire against objects which were not in view, an answer to arguments which had never been employed, was necessarily a very tame exhibition, and indeed the new member was hardly able to get through the oration to which it was evident he had given no common care. In slang phrase, he "broke down." Why was this? Sir James Mackintosh was not ignorant of the nature of the assembly he addressed; he could have explained to another all that was necessary to catch its ear; but, as I have said a few pages back, the character of a person governs his interests far more frequently than his interests govern his character; and the man I am speaking of was not the man whom a

sort of instinct hurries into the heat and fervour of a real contest. To brandish his glittering arms was to him the battle. He therefore persuaded himself that what he did with satisfaction he should do with success. It was just this which made his failure serious to him.

The runner who trips in a race and loses it may win races for the rest of his life; but if he stops in the middle of his course, because he is asthmatic and cannot keep his breath, few persons would bet on him again. Now, the failure of Mackintosh was of this kind; it was not an accidental, but a constitutional one, arising from defects or peculiarities that were part of himself. He never, then, recovered from it. And yet it could not be said that he spoke ill; on the contrary, notwithstanding certain defects in manner, he spoke, after a little practice, well, and far above the ordinary speaking of learned men and lawyers. Some of his orations may be read with admiration, and were even received with applause.

IV.

Where shall we find a nobler tone of statesmanlike philosophy than in the following condemnation of that policy which attached Genoa to Piedmont*—a condemnation not the less remarkable for the orator's not unskilful attempt to connect his former opposition to the French Revolution with the war he was then waging against the Holy Alliance?

"One of the grand and patent errors of the French Revolution was the fatal opinion, that it was possible for human skill to make a government. It was an error too generally prevalent not to be excusable. The American Revolution had given it a fallacious semblance of support, though no event in history more clearly showed its falsehood. The system of laws and the frame of society in North America remained after the Revolution, and remain to this day, fundamentally the same as they ever were.† The change in America, like the change in 1688, was

* 27th April, 1815.

† This idea has lately been brought forward by M. de Tocqueville, and treated by many as a novelty.

made in defence of legal right, not in pursuit of political improvement; and it was limited by the necessity of defence which produced it. The whole internal order remained, which had always been Republican. The somewhat slender tie which loosely joined these Republics to a monarchy, was easily and without violence divided. But the error of the French Revolutionists was, in 1789, the error of Europe. From that error we have been long reclaimed by fatal experience.

"We now see, or rather we have seen and felt, that a government is not like a machine or a building, the work of man; that it is the work of nature, like the nobler productions of the vegetable or animal world, which man may improve and corrupt, and even destroy, but which he cannot create. We have long learned to despise the ignorance or the hypocrisy of those who speak of giving a free constitution to a people, and to exclaim, with a great living poet:

> 'A gift of that which never can be given
> By all the blended powers of earth and heaven!'

"Indeed, we have gone, perhaps as usual, too near to the opposite error, and not made sufficient allowances for those dreadful cases, which I must call desperate, where, in long-enslaved countries, it is necessary either humbly and cautiously to lay foundations from which liberty may slowly rise, or acquiesce in the doom of perpetual bondage on ourselves and our children.

"But though we no longer dream of making governments, the confederacy of kings seem to feel no doubt of their own power to make a nation. A government cannot be made, because its whole spirit and principles spring from the character of the nation. There would be no difficulty in framing a government, if the habits of a people could be changed by a lawgiver; if he could obliterate their recollections, transform their attachment and reverence, extinguish their animosities and correct those sentiments which, being at variance with his opinions of public interest, he calls prejudices. Now this is precisely the power which our statesmen at Vienna have arrogated to themselves.

They not only form nations, but they compose them of elements apparently the most irreconcilable. They made one nation out of Norway and Sweden; they tried to make another out of Prussia and Saxony. They have, in the present case, forced together Piedmont and Genoa to form a nation which is to guard the avenues of Italy, and to be one of the main securities of Europe against universal monarchy.

"It was not the pretension of the ancient system to form states, to divide territory according to speculations of military convenience.

"The great statesmen of former times did not speak of their measures as the noble lord (Lord Castlereagh) did about the incorporation of Belgium with Holland (about which I say nothing), as a great improvement in the system of Europe. That is the language of those who revolutionize that system by a partition like that of Poland, by the establishment of the Federation of the Rhine at Paris, or by the creation of new states at Vienna. The ancient principle was to preserve all those States which had been founded by Time and Nature, the character of which was often maintained, and the nationality of which was sometimes created by the very irregularities of frontier and inequalities of strength, of which a shallow policy complains; to preserve all such States down to the smallest, first by their own national spirit, and secondly by that mutual jealousy which makes every great power the opponent of the dangerous ambition of every other; to preserve nations, living bodies, produced by the hand of Nature—not to form artificial dead machines, called nations, by the words and parchment of a diplomatic act—was the ancient system of our wiser forefathers, &c. &c. . . ."

V.

There is also a noble strain of eloquence in the following short defence of the slave-treaty with Spain:

"I feel pride in the British flag being for this object subjected to foreign ships. I think it a great and striking proof of magnanimity that the darling point of honour of our country, the British flag itself, which for a thousand

years has braved the battle and the breeze, which has defied confederacies of nations, to which we have clung closer and closer as the tempest roared around us, which has borne us through all perils and raised its head higher as the storm has assailed us more fearfully, should now bend voluntarily to the cause of justice and humanity—should now lower itself, never having been brought low by the mightiest, to the most feeble and defenceless—to those who, far from being able to return the benefits we would confer upon them, will never hear of those benefits, will never know, perhaps, even our name."

By far the most effective of Sir James Mackintosh's speeches in Parliament, however, was one that he delivered (June, 1819) against "The Foreign Enlistment Bill," a measure which was intended to prevent British subjects from aiding the South American colonies in the struggle they were then making for independence. No good report of this oration remains, but even our parliamentary records are sufficient to show that it possessed many of the rarer attributes of eloquence, and moving with a rapidity and a vigour (not frequent in Sir James's efforts), prevented his language from seeming laboured or his learning tedious.

It contained, doubtless, other passages more striking in the delivery, but the one which follows is peculiarly pleasing to me—considering the argument it answered and the audience to which it was addressed:

"Much has been said of the motives by which the merchants of England are actuated as to this question. A noble lord, the other night, treated these persons with great and unjust severity, imputing the solicitude which they feel for the success of the South American cause to interested motives. Without indulging in commonplace declamations against party men, I must considerately say that it is a question with me whether the interest of merchants do not more frequently coincide with the best interests of mankind than do the transient and limited views of politicians. If British merchants look with eagerness to the event of the struggle in America, no doubt they do so with the hope of deriving advantage from

that event. But on what is such hope founded? On the diffusion of beggary, on the maintenance of ignorance, on the confirmation, on the establishment of tyranny in America? No; these are the expectations of Ferdinand. The British merchant builds his hopes of trade and profit on the progress of civilization and good government; on the successful assertion of freedom—of freedom, that parent of talent, that parent of heroism, that parent of every virtue. The fate of America can only be necessary to commerce as it becomes accessory to the dignity and the happiness of the race of man."

VI.

As a parliamentary orator, Sir James Mackintosh never before or afterwards rose to so great a height as in this debate; but he continued at intervals, and on great and national questions, to deliver what may be called very remarkable essays up to the end of his career. I myself was present at his last effort of this description; and most interesting it was to hear the man who began his public life with the "Vindiciæ Gallicæ," closing it with a speech in favour of the Reform Bill. During the interval, nearly half a century had run its course. The principles which, forty years before, had appeared amidst the storm and tempest of doubtful discussion, and which, since that period, had been at various times almost totally obscured, were now again on the horizon, bright in the steady sunshine of matured opinion. The distinguished person who was addressing his countrymen on a great historical question was himself a history,—a history of his own time, of which, with the flexibility of an intelligent but somewhat feeble nature, he had shared the enthusiasm, the doubt, the despair, the hope, the triumph.

The speech itself was remarkable. Overflowing with thought and knowledge, containing sound general principles as to government, undisfigured by the violence of party spirit, it pleased and instructed those who took the pains to listen to it attentively; but it wanted the qualities which attract or command attention.

It were vain to seek in Mackintosh for the playful fancy

of Canning, the withering invective of Brougham, the deep earnestness of Plunkett. The speaker's person, moreover, was gaunt and ungainly, his accent Scotch, his voice monotonous, his action (the regular and graceless vibration of two long arms) sometimes vehement without passion, and sometimes almost cringing through good nature and civility. In short, his manner, wanting altogether the quiet concentration of self-possession, was peculiarly opposed to that dignified, simple, and straightforward style of public speaking, which may be characterised as "English."

Still, it must be remembered that he was then at an advanced age, and deprived, in some degree, of that mental, and yet more of that physical, energy, which at an earlier period might possibly have concealed these defects. I have heard, indeed, that on previous occasions there had been moments when a temporary excitement gave a natural animation to his voice and gestures, and that then the excellence of his arguments was made strikingly manifest by an effective delivery.

His chief reputation in Parliament, nevertheless, is not as an orator, but as a person successfully connected with one of those great movements of opinion which are so long running their course, and which it is the fortune of a man's life to encounter and be borne up upon when they are near their goal.

VII.

Sir Thomas More, in his "Utopia" (1520), says of thieving, that, "as the severity of the remedy is too great, so it is ineffectual." In Erasmus, Raleigh, Bacon, are to be found almost precisely the same phrases and maxims that a few years ago startled the House of Commons as novelties. "What a lamentable case it is," observes Sir Edward Coke (1620), "to see so many Christian men and women strangled on that cursed tree of the gallows, the prevention of which consisteth in three things:

'Good education,
'Good laws,
'Rare pardons.'"

Evelyn, in his preface to "State Trials" (1730),

observes, "that our legislation is very liberal of the lives of offenders, making no distinction between the most atrocious crimes and those of a less degree."

"Experience," says Montesquieu, "shows that in countries remarkable for the lenity of their laws, the spirit of its inhabitants is as much affected by slight penalties as in other countries by severe punishments."*

This feeling became general amongst reflecting men in the middle and towards the end of the eighteenth century. Johnson displays it in the "Rambler" (1751). Blackstone expressly declares that "every humane legislator should be extremely cautious of establishing laws which inflict the penalty of death, especially for slight offences." Mr. Grose, in writing on the Criminal Laws of England (1769), observes: "The sanguinary disposition of our laws, besides being a national reproach, is, as it may appear, an encouragement instead of a terror to delinquents."

At this time also appeared the pamphlet of "Beccaria" (1767), which was followed by an almost general movement in favour of milder laws throughout Europe. The Duke of Modena (1780) abolished the Inquisition in his states; the King of France, in 1781, the torture; in Russia, capital punishment—never used but in cases of treason—may be said, for all ordinary crimes, to have been done away with.

In England, where every doctrine is sure to find two parties, there was a contest between one set of men who wished our rigorous laws to be still more rigorously executed, and another that considered the rigour of those laws to be the main cause of their inefficiency. A pamphlet, called "Thoughts on Executive Justice," which produced some sensation at the moment, represented the first class of malcontents, and the author declaimed vehemently against those juries, who acquitted capital offenders because it went against their conscience to take away men's lives. Sir Samuel Romilly, then a very young man, replied to this pamphlet with its own facts, and contended that the way of insuring the punishment of criminals was to make that punishment more proportionate to their offences.

* "On the Power of Punishments," ch. xii.

From this pamphlet dates the modern battle which the great lawyer, whose public career commenced with it, carried subsequently to the floor of the House of Commons.

His exertions, however, were less fortunate than they deserved to be. To him, indeed, we owe, in a great measure, the spreading of truths amongst the many which had previously been confined to the few; but he never enjoyed the substantial triumph of these truths, for the one or two small successes which he obtained are scarcely worth mentioning.

His melancholy death took place in 1819, and Sir James Mackintosh, who had just previously called the attention of Parliament to the barbarous extent to which executions for forgery had been carried, now came forward as the successor of Romilly in the general work of criminal law reformation.

In March, 1819, accordingly, he moved for a committee to inquire into the subject, and obtained, such being the result in a great measure of his own able and temperate manner, a majority of nineteen. Again, in 1822, though opposed by the ministers and law-officers of the Crown, he carried a motion which pledged the House *to increase the efficiency by diminishing the rigour of our criminal jurisprudence;* and, in 1823, he followed up this triumph by Nine Resolutions, which, had they been adopted, would have taken away the punishment of death in the case of larceny from shops, dwelling-houses, and on navigable rivers, and also in those of forgery, sheep-stealing, and other felonies, made capital by the "*Marriage* and Black Act;" in short, he proposed that sentences of death should only be pronounced when it was intended to carry them into execution. Mr. Peel, then home secretary, opposed these resolutions, and obtained a majority against them; but he pledged himself at the same time to undertake, on behalf of the government, a plan of law reform, which, although less comprehensive than that which Sir James Mackintosh contended for, was a great measure in itself, and an immense step towards further improvement.

Mackintosh's success, throughout these efforts, was

mainly due to the plain unpretending manner in which he stated his case. "I don't mean," he said, "to frame a new criminal code; God forbid I should have such an idle and extravagant pretension. I don't mean to abolish the punishment of death; I believe that societies and individuals may use it as a legitimate mode of defence. Neither do I mean to usurp on the right of pardon now held by the Crown, which, on the contrary, I wish, practically speaking, to restore. I do not even hope that I shall be able to point out a manner in which the penalty of the law should always be inflicted and never remitted. But I find things in this condition—that the infliction of the law is the exception, and I desire to make it the rule. I find two hundred cases in which capital punishment is awarded by the statute-book, and only twenty-five in which, for seventy years, such punishment has been executed. Why is this? Because the code says one thing, and the moral feeling of your society another. All I desire is that the two should be analogous, and that our laws should award such punishments as our consciences permit us to inflict."

It was this kind of tone which reassured the House that it was not perilling property by respecting life, and brought about more quickly than less prudent management would have done that reform to which the general spirit of the time was tending, and which must necessarily, a few years sooner or later, have arrived.

VIII.

Thus, Sir James Mackintosh not only delivered some remarkable speeches in Parliament, but he connected his name with a great and memorable parliamentary triumph; nor is this all, he was true to his party, opposing the government, though with some internal scruples, in 1820; supporting Mr. Canning in 1827; and going again into opposition, to the Duke of Wellington, in 1828. And yet, notwithstanding the ability usually displayed in his speeches, notwithstanding the result of his efforts in criminal law reform, and, more than all, notwithstanding the constancy during late years of his politics, he held but

a third-rate place with the Whigs, and when they came into office in 1830, was only made secretary at that board of which he had been offered the presidency twenty years before. It is easy to say that this was because he had not aristocratical connections. Mr. Poulett Thompson was not more highly connected, and yet, though thirty years his junior, and far his inferior in knowledge and mental capacity, received at the time a higher office, and rose in ten years to the first places and honours of the State. The one had much the higher order of intelligence, the other the more resolute practical character. What you expected from the first, he did not perform; the other went beyond your expectations. For this is to be remarked: a man's career is formed of the number of little things he is always doing, whereas your opinion of him is frequently derived, as I have already said, from something which, under a particular stimulus, he has done once or twice, and may do now and then.

The fact is that Mackintosh was not fit for the daily toil and struggle of Parliament; he had not the quickness, the energy, the hard and active nature of those who rise by constant exertions in popular assemblies. He did very well to come out like the State steed, on great and solemn occasions, with gorgeous caparison and prancing action, but he did not do as the every-day hack on a plain road. He was, moreover, inclined by his nature rather to repose than to strife; and that which we do by effort we cannot be doing for ever—nor even do frequently well. His reason, which was acute, told him what he should be; but he had not the energy to be it. For instance, on returning to England, he exclaimed: "It is time to be something decided, and I am resolved to exert myself to the utmost in public life, if I have a seat in Parliament, or to condemn myself to profound retirement if the doors of St. Stephen's are barred to me."*

He had not, however, been many years a member before he accepted a professorship (year 1818) at Haileybury College, because it left him in the House of Commons; and refused the chair of moral philosophy at Edinburgh

* See "Life of Sir James Mackintosh," by his Son, vol. ii. p. 2.

(1818), because, it would have withdrawn him from it. The great stream of public life thus passed for ever by him; he could neither commit himself to its waves nor yet avoid lingering on its shores. Now and then, in a moment of excitement, he would rush into it, but it was soon again to retire to some sunny reverie, or some shady regret, where he could quietly plot for the future, or mourn over the past, or indulge the scheme of lettered indolence which wooed him at the moment.

Part III.

MERITS AS A WRITER, DEATH, AND ESTIMATE OF GENERAL CAPACITY AND CHARACTER.

History of England.—Articles in "Edinburgh Review."—Treatise on Ethical Philosophy.—Revolution of 1688.—Bentham's system of morals and politics.—His own death.—Comparison with Montaigne.

I.

I have said that Sir James Mackintosh allowed himself to be lured from the strife of politics by the love of letters. And what was the species of learned labour on which his intervals of musing leisure were employed? He read at times—this he was always able and willing to do—for the future composition of a great historical work—the "History of England"—which his friends and the public, with a total ignorance of his sort of character and ability, always sighed that he should undertake, and considered that he would worthily accomplish. But while he read for the future composition of this work, he actually wrote but little for it. The little he did write was undertaken at the call of some particular impulse, and capable of being finished before that impulse was passed away. In such writings he followed the bent of his nature, and in them accordingly he best succeeded, as they who refer to his contributions to the "Edinburgh Review"* may be well

* Principal Papers of Sir James Mackintosh in the "Edinburgh Review":

Vol. 20. Account of Boy born Blind and Deaf.
Ib. Wakefield's Account of Ireland.
21. Madame de Staël: On Suicide.
22. *Ib.* L'Allemagne.
Ib. On Rogers' Poems.

disposed to acknowledge. At last, within a few yards of his grave, he made a start. Life was drawing to a close, the season for action was almost passed, and of all he had mused and read and planned for it, there existed nothing. This thought galled him to a species of exertion, and he is one of the very few men who, at an advanced age, crowded the most considerable and ambitious of their works into the last years of their life.

The volumes on "English History" brought out in Dr. Lardner's "Encyclopædia," the "Life of Sir Thomas More," which appeared in the same publication, a "Treatise on Ethical Philosophy," and a commencement of the "History of the Revolution of 1688," delivered to the world after his death, are these works.

They all exhibit the author's defects and merits; third-rate in themselves, and yet at various times persuading us that he who wrote them was a first-rate man. Let us take up, for instance, the volumes on "English History."

Vol. 24. On the French Restoration.
26. Life of James II. (Stuart's Papers.)
27. Stuart's Preliminary Essay (Metaphysics) to Encyclopædia Britannica.
36. *Ib.*
34. Parliamentary Reform.
35. Sismondi: Histoire des Français.
36. Sir George Mackenzie's "Scotland."
44. Who wrote "Eikon Basilike?"
Ib. Danish Revolution. (Struensee.)
November, 1822. The Partition of Poland.
No. 89. Portugal—Don Miguel.

The following articles were also published by Sir James in the "Monthly Review":

Year 1795. Vol. 19. Burke's Letter to a Noble Lord.
Ib. A Letter to Mr. Miles, occasioned by his late scurrilous attack on Mr. Burke.
20. Miscellaneous Works of Gibbon (Part).
1796. *Ib.* Roscoe's "Life of Lorenzo de Medici."
Ib. Moore's "View of the Causes of the French Revolution."
21. Burke's Two Letters.
Ib. Thoughts on A Regicide Peace.
Ib. O'Brien's "Utrum Horun?"
Ib. Burke's Two Letters (concluded).

The narrative is languid, and interrupted by disquisitions: the style is in general prolix, cumbrous, cold, profuse; nevertheless, these volumes are full of thought and knowledge; they contain many curious anecdotes, many scattered observations of profound wisdom, while here and there burst upon us, by surprise it must be confessed, passages which, written under a temporary excitement, display remarkable spirit and power. Such is the description of Becket's murder:

II.

"Provoked by these acts of extraordinary imprudence, Henry is said to have called out before an audience of lords, knights, and gentlemen, 'To what a miserable state am I reduced, when I cannot be at rest in my own realm, by reason of only one priest; is there no one to deliver me from my troubles?' Four knights of distinguished rank, William de Tracy, Hugh de Moreville, Richard Briths, and Reginald Fitz-Urse (December 28), interpreted the King's complaints as commands. They repaired to Canterbury, confirmed in their purpose by finding that Becket had recommenced his excommunications by that of Robert de Broe, and that he had altered his course homeward to avoid the royalist bishops on their way to court, in Normandy; they instantly went to his house, and required him, not very mildly, to withdraw the censures of the prelates, and take the oath to his lord-paramount. He refused. John of Salisbury, his faithful and learned secretary, ventured at this alarming moment to counsel peace. The primate thought that nothing was left to him but a becoming death.

"The knights retired to put on their armour, and there seems to have been sufficient interval either for negotiation or escape. At that moment, indeed, measures were preparing for legal proceedings against him.

"But the visible approach of peril awakened his sense of dignity, and breathed an unusual decorum over his language and deportment. He went through the cloisters into the church, whither he was followed by his enemies, attended by a band of soldiers, whom they had hastily gathered together. They rushed into the church with

drawn swords. Tracy cried out, 'Where is the traitor? Where is the archbishop?' Becket, who stood before the altar of St. Bennet, answered gravely, 'Here am I, no traitor, but the archbishop.' Tracy pulled him by the sleeve, saying: 'Come hither, thou art a prisoner.' He pulled back his arm with such force as to make Tracy stagger, and said: 'What meaneth this, William? I have done *thee* many pleasures; comest thou with armed men into my church?' 'It is not possible that thou shouldst live any longer,' called out Fitz-Urse. The intrepid primate replied: 'I am ready to die for my God, in defence of the liberties of the Church.'

"At that moment, either by a relapse into his old disorders, or to show that his non-resistance sprung not from weakness, but from duty, he took hold of Tracy by the habergeon, or gorget, and flung him with such violence as had nearly thrown him to the ground. He then bowed his head, as if he would pray, and uttered his last words: 'To God and St. Mary I commend my soul, and the cause of the Church!' Tracy aimed a heavy blow at him, which fell on a bystander. The assassins fell on him with many strokes, and though the second brought him to the ground, they did not cease till his brains were scattered over the pavement."*

III.

The characters of Alfred, of William I., of Henry VII., are superior to any sketches of the same persons with which I am acquainted. The summing up of events into pictures of certain epochs is frequently done with much skill, and I particularly remember a short description of the commencement of the Crusades, concluding with the capture of Jerusalem;—the state of Europe in the thirteenth century, comprising a large portion of history in two pages; and the death of Simon de Montfort, with the establishment of the English Constitution. In a true spirit of historical philosophy, Sir James Mackintosh says:

"The introduction of knights, citizens, and burgesses into the Legislature, by its continuance in circumstances

* The death of Rizzio is an almost equally vivid description.

so apparently inauspicious, showed how exactly it suited the necessities and demands of society at that moment. No sooner had events brought forward the measure, than its fitness to the state of the community became apparent. It is often thus that in the clamours of men for a succession of objects, society selects from among them the one that has an affinity with itself, and which most easily combines with its state at the time."

The condition of Europe, also, just prior to the wars of the Roses, is rapidly, picturesquely, and comprehensively sketched.

"The historian who rests for a little space between the termination of the Plantagenet wars in France and the commencement of the civil wars of the two branches of that family in England, may naturally look around him, reviewing some of the more important events which had passed, and casting his eye onward to the preparations for the mighty changes which were to produce an influence on the character and lot of the human race. A very few particulars only can be selected as specimens from so vast a mass. The foundations of the political system of the European commonwealth were now laid. A glance over the map of Europe, in 1453, will satisfy an observer that the territories of different nations were then fast approaching to the shape and extent which they retain at this day. The English islanders had only one town of the continent remaining in their hands. The Mahometans of Spain were on the eve of being reduced under the Christian authority. Italy had, indeed, lost her liberty, but had yet escaped the ignominy of a foreign yoke. Moscovy was emerging from the long domination of the Tartars. Venice, Hungary, and Poland, three states now placed under foreign masters, guarded the eastern frontier of Christendom against the Ottoman barbarians, whom the absence of foresight, of mutual confidence, and a disregard of general safety and honour, disgraceful to the western governments, had just suffered to master Constantinople and to subjugate the eastern Christians. France had consolidated the greater part of her central and commanding territories. In the transfer of the Netherlands to the

house of Austria originated the French jealousy of that power, then rising in South-Eastern Germany. The empire was daily becoming a looser confederacy under a nominal ruler, whose small remains of authority every day continued to lessen. The internal or constitutional history of the European nations threatened, in almost every continental country, the fatal establishment of an absolute monarchy, from which the free and generous spirit of the northern barbarians did not protect their degenerate posterity. In the Netherlands an ancient gentry, and burghers, enriched by traffic, held their still limited princes in check. In Switzerland, the patricians of a few towns, together with the gallant peasantry of the Alpine valleys, escaped a master. But Parliaments and Diets, States-General and Cortes, were gradually disappearing from view, or reduced from august assemblies to insignificant formalities, and Europe seemed on the eve of exhibiting nothing to the disgusted eye but the dead uniformity of imbecile despotism, dissolute courts, and cruelly oppressed nations.

"In the meantime the unobserved advancement and diffusion of knowledge were preparing the way for discoveries, of which the high result will be contemplated only by unborn ages. The mariner's compass had conducted the Portuguese to distant points on the coast of Africa, and was about to lead them through the unploughed ocean to the famous regions of the East. Civilized men, hitherto cooped up on the shores of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, now visited the whole of their subject planet and became its undisputed sovereigns. The great adventurer* was then born, who, with two undecked boats and one frail sloop, containing with difficulty a hundred and twenty persons, dared to stretch across an untraversed ocean, which had hitherto bounded the imaginations as well as the enterprises of men; and who, instead of that India renowned in legend and in story, of which he was in quest, laid open a new world which, under the hands of the European race, was one day to produce governments, laws, manners, modes of civilization and states of society

* Columbus, born 1441, or earlier, according to Mr. W. Irving.

almost as different as its native plants and animals from those of ancient Europe.

"Who could then—who can even now—foresee all the prodigious effects of these discoveries on the fortunes of mankind?"

IV.

No one will deny that what I have just quoted might have been written by a great historian; yet no one will say that the work I quote from is a great history.

It is a series of parts, some excellent, some indifferent, but which altogether do not form a whole. The fragment of the Revolution, though a fragment, presents the same qualities and defects. The narrative is poor; some of the characters, such as those of Rochester, Sunderland, and Halifax—and some of the passages (that with which the work opens, for instance)—are excellent; but then, these fine figures of gold embroidery are worked here and there with care and toil, on an ordinary sort of canvas.

The "Life of Sir Thomas More" is the only complete performance; and this because it was a portrait which might have been taken at one sitting.

The "Treatise on Ethics," first published in the supplement of the seventh edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica," and which has since appeared in a separate form under the auspices of Professor Whewell, is still more remarkable, both in its design and execution, as characterising the author. He seems here, indeed, to have been aware of his own capabilities, and to have accommodated his labours to them; for his work is conceived in separate and distinct portions, and he undertakes to write the course and progress of philosophy by descriptions of its most illustrious masters and professors; a plan gracefully imagined, as diffusing the charm of personal narrative over dry and speculative disquisition.

Nothing, accordingly, can be better executed than some of these pictures. It would be difficult to paint Hobbes, Leibnitz, Shaftesbury, more faithfully, or in more suitable colours; the contrast between the haughty Bossuet and the gentle Fénelon is perfectly sustained; while Berkeley the virtuous, the benevolent, the imaginative, is drawn

with a pencil which would even have satisfied the admiration of his contemporaries:

V.

"*Berkeley.*—Ancient learning, exact science, polished society, modern literature, and the fine arts, contributed to adorn and enrich the mind of this accomplished man. All his contemporaries agreed with the satirist in ascribing

"'To Berkeley every virtue under heaven!'

"Adverse factions and hostile wits concurred only in loving, admiring, and contributing to advance him. The severe sense of Swift endured his visions; the modest Addison endeavoured to reconcile Clarke to his ambitious speculations. His character converted the satire of Pope into fervid praise. Even the fastidious and turbulent Atterbury said, after an interview with him, 'So much understanding, so much knowledge, so much innocence, and such humility, I did not think had been the portion of any but angels, till I saw this gentleman.'* 'Lord Bathurst told me,' says Warton, 'that the members of the Scribblers' Club being met at his house at dinner, they agreed to rally Berkeley, who was also his guest, on his scheme at Bermudas. Berkeley, having listened to the many lively things they had to say, begged to be heard in his turn, and displayed his plan with such an astonishing and animating force of eloquence and enthusiasm that they were struck dumb, and, after some pause, rose all up together, with earnestness exclaiming, "Let us set out with him immediately!"'† It was when thus beloved and celebrated that he conceived, at the age of forty-five, the design of devoting his life to reclaim and convert the natives of North America; and he employed as much influence and solicitation as common men do for their most prized objects, in obtaining leave to resign his dignities and revenues, to quit his accomplished and affectionate friends, and to bury himself in what must have seemed an intellectual desert. After four years'

* Duncombe's Letters, pp. 106, 107.

† Warton on "Pope."

residence at Newport, in Rhode Island, he was compelled, by the refusal of government to furnish him with funds for his college, to forego his work of heroic, or rather godlike benevolence, though not without some consoling forethought of the fortune of a country where he had sojourned:

> "'Westward the course of empire takes its way:
> The first four acts already past,
> A fifth shall close the drama with the day,
> Time's noblest offspring is its last.'

"Thus disappointed in his ambition of keeping a school for savage children, at a salary of a hundred pounds a year, he was received on his return with open arms by the philosophical Queen, at whose metaphysical parties he made one, with Sherlock, who, as well as Smallridge, was his supporter, and with Hoadley, who, following Clarke, was his antagonist. By her influence he was made Bishop of Cloyne. It is one of his greatest merits, that though of English extraction, he was a true Irishman, and the first eminent Protestant, after the unhappy contest at the Revolution, who avowed his love for all his countrymen;* and contributed, by a truly Christian address to the Roman Catholics of his diocese, to their perfect quiet during the rebellion of 1745. From the writings of his advanced years, when he chose a medical tract† to be the vehicle of philosophical reflections, though it cannot be said that he relinquished his early opinions, it is at least apparent that his mind had received a new bent, and was habitually turned from reasoning towards contemplation. His immaterialism, indeed, modestly appears, but only to purify and elevate our thoughts, and to fix them on mind, the paramount and primeval principle of all things. 'Perhaps,' says he, 'the truths about innate ideas may be, that there are properly no ideas on passive objects in the mind but what are derived from sense, but that there are also, besides these, her own acts and operations—such are notions;' a statement which seems once more to admit general conceptions, and which might have served, as well as the parallel passage of Leibnitz, as the basis of modern

* See his "Querist," p. 358, published in 1737.

† "Siris; or, Reflections on Tar Water."

philosophy in Germany. From these compositions of his old age, he then appears to have recurred with fondness to Plato, and the later Platonists: writers from whose mere reasonings an intellect so acute could hardly hope for an argumentative satisfaction of all its difficulties, and whom he probably either studied as a means of inuring his mind to objects beyond the visible diurnal sphere, and of attaching it, through frequent meditation, to that perfect and transcendent goodness, to which his moral feelings always pointed, and which they incessantly strove to grasp. His mind, enlarging as it rose, at length receives every theist, however imperfect his belief, to a communion in its philosophic piety. 'Truth,' he beautifully concludes, 'is the cry of all, but the game of few. Certainly, where it is the chief passion, it does not give way to vulgar cares, nor is it contented with a little ardour in the early time of life; active perhaps to pursue, but not so fit to weigh and revise. He that would make a real progress in knowledge, must dedicate his age as well as youth, the latter growth as well as first fruits, at the altar of truth.' So did Berkeley, and such were almost his latest words.

"His general principles of ethics may be shortly stated by himself: 'As God is a being of infinite goodness, His end is the good of His creatures. The general well-being of all men of all nations, of all ages of the world, is that which He designs should be procured by the concurring actions of each individual.' Having stated that this end can be pursued only in one of two ways—either by computing the consequences of each action, or by obeying the rules which generally tend to happiness; and having shown the first to be impossible, he rightly infers, 'That the end to which God requires the concurrence of human actions, must be carried on by the observation of certain determinate and universal rules, or moral precepts, which in their own nature have a necessary tendency to promote the well-being of mankind, taking in all nations and ages, from the beginning to the end of the world.'* A romance, of which a journey to an Utopia in the centre of Africa

* Sermon in Trinity College Chapel on "Passive Obedience," 1712.

forms the chief part, called, 'The adventures of Signor Gaudentio di Lucca,' has been commonly ascribed to him; probably on no other ground than its union of pleasing invention with benevolence and elegance."*

VI.

The following short description of the practical Paley comes aptly after that of this charming Utopian:

"*Paley.*—The natural frame of Paley's understanding fitted it more for business and the world than for philosophy; and he accordingly enjoyed with considerable relish the few opportunities which the latter part of his life afforded, of taking a part in the affairs of his country, as a magistrate. Penetration and shrewdness, firmness and coolness, a vein of pleasantry, fruitful, though somewhat unrefined, with an original homeliness and significancy of expression, were perhaps more remarkable in his conversation than the restraints of authorship and profession allowed them to be in his writings. His taste for the common business and ordinary amusements of life, fortunately gave a zest to the company which his neighbourhood chanced to yield, without rendering him insensible to the pleasures of intercourse with more enlightened society. The practical bent of his nature is visible in the language of his writings, which, on practical matters, is as precise as the nature of the subject requires; but, in his rare and reluctant efforts to rise to first principles, becomes undeterminate and unsatisfactory, though no man's composition was more free from the impediments which hinder a writer's meaning from being quickly and clearly seen. He possessed that chastised acuteness of discrimination, exercised on the affairs of men, and habitually looking to a purpose beyond the mere increase of knowledge, which forms the character of a lawyer's understanding, and which is apt to render a mere lawyer too subtle for the management of affairs, and yet too gross for the pursuit of general truths. His style is as near perfection, in its kind, as any in our language. Perhaps no words were ever more expressive and illustra-

* "Gentleman's Magazine," 1777.

tive than those in which he represents the art of life to be that of rightly setting our habits."—"Ethical Philosophy," p. 274.

Such are the portraits in this work; the history of ancient ethics, and the vindication of the scholiasts also, are in themselves and as separate compositions of great merit; but when, after admiring these different fragments, we look at the plan, at the system which is to result from them, or endeavour to follow out the line of reasoning which is to bring them together—we quit the land of realities for that of shadows, and are obliged to confess that the author has barely sufficient vigour to make his meaning intelligible.

VII.

To give the history intended to be given by Sir James's treatise, would be without the scope of the present sketch; but it may not be amiss to say something of the state of the philosophical opinions which existed at the time of its publication, and which, in fact, called it forth. Helvetius, the friend of Voltaire and Diderot—Helvetius, whose works have been considered as merely the record of those opinions which circulated around him—the most amusing, if not the most logical of metaphysicians, wrote that everything proceeded from the senses, and that man (for this was one of his favourite hypotheses) differed from a monkey mainly because his hands were tenderer and more soft.

The doctrine of sensation led necessarily to that of selfishness, since, owing what we think to what we feel, every idea is the consequence of some pain or pleasure, and our own pains and pleasures are thus the parents of all our emotions.

A strong reaction, however, took place in the beginning of the nineteenth against the eighteenth century; the original existence of certain sentiments or affections implanted by nature, was contended for, in Germany and in Scotland, under a variety of qualifications. The school, which said that the affections arose from this primary source, called them disinterested, as that which contended

that they more or less directly proceeded from some cause which had reference to ourselves, called them interested. There was but one step easily made by both parties in carrying out their doctrines.

The philosophers who thought that self-interest, "through some certain strainers well refined," was the cause of all our actions and ideas, maintained that utility was the only measure of virtue, or of greatness. The philosophers of the opposite faction argued on the contrary, that as many of our emotions were natural and involuntary, so there was also a sense of wrong and right, natural and involuntary, and connected with those emotions implanted in us.

Living in a retired part of London, visited only by his adorers and disciples, looking rarely beyond the confines of his early knowledge, and on the train of thinking it had inspired, an old and singular gentleman, with great native powers of mind, almost alone resisted the new impulse, and, classifying and extending the doctrines of the French philosophy, established a reputation and a school of his own. The charm of Mr. Bentham's philosophy, however obscured by fanciful names and unnecessary subdivisions, is its apparent clearness and simplicity.

He considers with the disciples of Helvetius—1, that our ideas do come from our sensations, and that consequently we are selfish ; 2, that man in doing what is most useful to himself does what is right.

Very strange and fantastical notions have been propagated against the philosopher by persons so egregiously mistaking him as to imagine that what he thus says of mankind generally—of man, meaning every man—is said of *a* man, of man separately ; so that a murderer, pretend these commentators, has only to be sure that a second murder is useful to him by preventing the detection of the first, in order to be justified in committing it. It were useless to dwell upon this ridiculous construction. But in urging men to pursue the general interest of society at large, in telling them that to do what is most for that interest is to act usefully and thereby virtuously,

Mr. Bentham found it necessary to explain how such interest was to be discovered.

Accordingly he has propounded that the general interest of a society must be considered to be the interest of the greatest number in that society, and that the greatest number in any society is the best judge of its interest. Moreover, in the further development of his doctrine, he contends that a majority would always, under natural circumstances, govern a minority, and that, therefore, there is a natural tendency, if not thwarted, towards the happiness and good government of mankind. This system of philosophy gained the more attention from its being also a system of politics. According to Mr. Bentham, that which was most important to men depended on maintaining what he considered the natural law, viz., governing the minority by the majority.

VIII.

Unfortunately for the destiny of mankind, and the soundness of the Benthamite doctrine, it is by no means certain that the majority in any community is the best judge of its interests; whilst it is even less certain, if it did know these interests, that it would necessarily and invariably follow them. In almost every collection of men the intelligent few know better what is for the common interest than the ignorant many; and it is rare indeed to see communities or individuals pursuing their interest steadily even when they perceive it clearly. It would, perhaps, be more reconcilable to reason to say that the intellect of a community should govern a community; but this assertion is also open to objection, since a small number of intelligent men might govern for their own interest, and not for the interest of the society they represented. In short, though it is easy to see that the science of government does not consist in giving power to the greatest number, but in giving it to the most intelligent, and making it for their interest to govern for the interest of the greatest number; still, every day teaches us that good government is rather a thing relative than a thing absolute; that all governments have good

mixed with evil, and evil mixed with good; and that the statesman's task, as is beautifully demonstrated by Montesquieu, is, not to destroy an evil combined with a greater good, nor to create a good accompanied with a greater evil; but to calculate how the greatest amount of good and the least amount of evil can be combined together. Hence it is, that the best governments with which we are acquainted seem rather to have been fashioned by the working hand of daily experience, than by the artistic fingers of philosophical speculation.

Nevertheless, the theory, that the good of the greatest number in any community ought to be the object which its government should strive to attain, and the maxim, that the interest and happiness of every unit in a community are to be treated as a portion of the interest and happiness of the whole community, are humanizing precepts, and have, through the influence of Mr. Bentham and of his disciples, produced, within my own memory, a considerable change in the public opinion of England.

Mr. Bentham's name, then, is far more above the scoff of his antagonists than below the enthusiasm of his disciples; and it is in this spirit, and with a becoming respect, that Sir James Mackintosh treats the philosopher while he combats his philosophy.

IX.

In regard to the theory of Sir James himself, if I understand it rightly (and it is rather, as I have said, indistinctly expressed), he accepts neither the doctrine of innate ideas disinterestedly producing or ordering our actions, nor that of sense-derived ideas by which, with a concentrated regard to self, some suppose men to be governed—but imagines an association of ideas, naturally suggested by our human condition, which, according to a pre-ordinated state of the mind, produces, as in chemical processes, some emotion different from any of the combined elements or causes from which it springs.

This emotion, once existing, requires, without consideration or reflection, its gratification. In this manner the satisfaction of benevolence and pity springs as much

from a spontaneous desire as the satisfaction of hunger; and man is unconsciously taught, through feelings necessary to him as man, to wish involuntarily for that which, on reflection and experience, he would find (such is the beautiful dispensation of Providence) most for his happiness and advantage.

The union, assemblage, or incorporation, if one may so speak, of these involuntary desires, affecting and affected by them all, becomes our universal moral sense or conscience, which in each of its propensities is gratified or mortified, according to our conduct.

X.

Here end my criticisms. They have passed rapidly in review the principal works and events of Sir James Mackintosh's life;* and what have they illustrated? That, which I commenced by observing: that he had made several excellent speeches, that he had taken an active part in politics, that he had written ably upon history, that he had manifested a profound knowledge of philosophy; but that he had not been pre-eminent as an orator, as a politician, as an historian, as a philosopher.† It may be doubted whether any speech or book of his will long survive his time; but a very valuable work might be compiled from his writings and speeches. Indeed, there are hardly any books in our language more interesting or more instructive than the two volumes

* He published the "Vindiciæ Gallicæ" in 1791; he gave his lectures in 1799; he appeared as Peltier's advocate in the same year; he entered Parliament in 1813; he delivered his celebrated speech against the Foreign Enlistment Bill in 1819, and carried his motion pledging the House of Commons to an improvement in the criminal law in 1822; his work on "Ethics" was published in 1830; his "History of England" in 1830-31.

† B. Constant was another instance of this kind, and it is singular to see Mackintosh himself thus judging him:—"Few men have turned talent to less account than Constant. His powers of mind are very great, but as they have always been exerted on the events of the moment, and as his works want that laboured perfection which is more necessary but more difficult in such writings than in any others, they have left us a vague or faint reputation which will scarcely survive the speaker or writer."

published by his son, and which display in every page the best qualities of an excellent heart and an excellent understanding, set off by the most amiable and remarkable simplicity. His striking, peculiar, and unrivalled merit, however, was that of a conversationalist. Great good-nature, great and yet gentle animation, much learning, and a sound, discriminating, and comprehensive judgment, made him this. He had little of the wit of words—brilliant repartées, caustic sayings, concentrated and epigrammatic turns of expression. But he knew everything and could talk of everything without being tedious. A lady of great wit, intellect, and judgment (Lady William Russell), in describing his soft Scotch voice, said to me—"Mackintosh played on your understanding with a flageolet, Macaulay with a trumpet." Having lived much by himself and with books, and much also in the world and with men, he had the light anecdote and easy manner of society, and the grave and serious gatherings in of lonely hours. He added also to much knowledge considerable powers of observation; and there are few persons of whom he speaks, even at the dawn of their career, whom he has not judged with discrimination. His agreeableness, moreover, being that of a full mind expressed with facility, was the most translatable of any man's, and he succeeded with foreigners, and in France, which he visited three times—once at the peace of Amiens, again in 1814, and again in 1824—quite as much as in his own country, and with his own countrymen. Madame de Staël and Benjamin Constant prized him not less than did Lord Dudley or Lord Byron. It was not only in England, then, but also on the Continent, where his early pamphlet and distinguished friendships had made him equally known—that he ever remained the *man of promise;* until, amidst hopes which his vast and various information, his wonderful memory, his copious elocution, and his transitory fits of energy, still nourished, he died, in the sixty-seventh year of his age, universally admired and regretted, though without a high reputation for any one thing, or the ardent attachment of any particular set of persons. His death, which took place the 30th of May, 1832, was occasioned

by a small fragment of chicken-bone, which, having lacerated the trachea, created a wound that ultimately proved fatal. He met his end with calmness and resignation, expressing his belief in the Christian faith, and placing his trust in it.

XI.

No man doing so little ever went through a long life continually creating the belief that he would ultimately do so much. A want of earnestness, a want of passion, a want of genius, prevented him from playing a first-rate part amongst men during his day, and from leaving any of those monuments behind him which command the attention of posterity. A love of knowledge, an acute and capacious intelligence, an early and noble ambition, led him into literary and active life, and furnished him with the materials and at moments with the energy by which success in both is obtained. An amiable disposition, a lively flow of spirits, an extraordinary and varied stock of information made his society agreeable to the most distinguished persons of his age, and induced them, encouraged by some occasional displays of remarkable power, to consider his available abilities to be greater than they really were.

"What have you done," he relates that a French lady once said to him, "that people should think you so superior?" "I was obliged," he adds, "as usual, to refer to my projects." For active life he was too much of the academic school:—believing nearly all great distinctions to be less than they were, and remaining irresolute between small ones. He passed, as he himself said, from Burke to Fox in half an hour, and remained weeks, as we learn from a friend (Lord Nugent), in determining whether he should employ "usefulness" or "utility" in some particular composition. Such is not the stuff out of which great leaders or statesmen are formed. His main error as a writer and as a speaker was his elaborate struggle against that easy idle way of delivering himself, which made the charm of his talk when he did not think of what he was saying. "The great fault of my manner," he himself observes somewhere, "is that I overload." And to many of his more finished compositions we might,

indeed, apply the old saying of the critic, who on being asked whether he admired a certain tragedy of Dionysius, replied: "I have not seen it; it is obscured with language." His early compositions had a sharper and terser style than his later ones, the activity of the author's mind being greater, and his doubts and toils after perfection less; but even these were over-prepared. Can he be considered a failure? No; if you compare him with other men. Yes; if you compare him with the general idea entertained as to himself. The reputation he attained, however vague and uncertain, the writings that he left, though inferior to the prevalent notions as to his powers,—all placed him on a pedestal of conspicuous, though not of gigantic elevation amongst his contemporaries. The results of his life only disappointed when you measured them by the anticipations which his merits had excited—then he became "the man of promise." Could he have arrived at greater eminence than that which he attained? if so, it must have been by a different road. I cannot repeat too often that no man struggles perpetually and victoriously against his own character; and one of the first principles of success in life, is so to regulate our career as rather to turn our physical constitution and natural inclinations to good account, than to endeavour to counteract the one or oppose the other.

There can be no general comparison between Montaigne and Mackintosh. The first was an original thinker, and the latter a combiner and retailer of the thoughts of others. But I have often pictured to myself the French philosopher lounging away the greatest portion of his life in the old square turret of his château, yielding to his laziness all that it exacted from him, and becoming, almost in spite of himself, the first magistrate of his town, and, though carelessly and discursively, the greatest writer of his time. He gave the rein to the idleness of his nature, and had reason to be satisfied with the employment of his life.

On the other hand, let us look at the accomplished Scotchman, constantly agitated by his aspirations after fame and his inclinations for repose; formed for literary

ease, forcing himself into political conflict—dreaming of a long-laboured history, and writing a hasty article in a review; earnest about nothing, because the objects to which he momentarily directed his efforts were not likely to give the permanent distinction for which he pined; and thus, with a doubtful mind and a broken career, achieving little that was worthy of his abilities, or equal to the expectations of his friends. I have said there can be no general comparison between men whose particular faculties were no doubt of a very different order; yet, had the one mixed in contest with the bold and factious spirits of his day, he would have been but a poor "*ligueur;*" and had the other abstained from politics and renounced long and laborious compositions, merely writing under the stimulus of some accidental inspiration, it is probable that his name would have gone down to posterity as that of the most agreeable and instructive essayist of his remarkable epoch. But at all events that name is graven on the monument which commemorates more Christian manners and more mild legislation: and "Blessed shall he be," as said our great lawyer, "who layeth the first stone of this building; more blessed he that proceeds in it; most of all he that finisheth it in the glory of God, and the honour of our king and nation."

COBBETT,

THE CONTENTIOUS MAN.

Part I.

FROM HIS BIRTH, IN MARCH, 1762, TO HIS QUITTING THE UNITED STATES, JUNE 1ST, 1800.

Son of a small farmer.—Boyhood spent in the country.—Runs away from home.—Becomes a lawyer's clerk.—Enlists as a soldier, 1784.—Learns grammar and studies Swift.—Goes to Canada.—Remarked for good conduct.—Rises to rank of sergeant-major.—Gets discharge, 1791.—Marries.—Quits Europe for United States.—Starts as a bookseller in Pennsylvania.—Becomes a political writer of great power.—Takes a violent anti-republican tone.—Has to suffer different prosecutions, and at last sets sail for England.

I.

The character which I am now tempted to delineate is just the reverse of that which I rise from describing. Mackintosh was a man of great powers of reasoning, of accomplished learning, but of little or no sustained energy. His vision took a wide and calm range; he saw all things coolly, dispassionately, and, except at his first entry into life, was never so lost in his admiration of one object as to overlook the rest. His fault lay in rather the opposite extreme; his perception of the universal weakened that of the particular, and the variety of colours which appeared at once before him became too blended in his sight for the adequate appreciation of each.

The subject of this memoir, on the contrary, though he could argue well in favour of any opinion he adopted, had not that elevated and philosophic cast of mind which makes men inquire after truth for the sake of truth,

regarding its pursuit as a delight, its attainment as a duty. Neither could he take that comprehensive view of affairs which affords to the judgment an ample scope for the comparison and selection of opinions. But he possessed a rapid power of concentration; a will that scorned opposition; he saw clearly that one side of a question which caught his attention; and pursued the object he had momentarily in view with an energy that never recoiled before a danger, and was rarely arrested by a scruple. The sense of his force gave him the passion for action; but he encouraged this passion until it became restlessness, a desire to fight rather for the pleasure of fighting than for devotion to any cause for which he fought.

While Mackintosh always struggled against his character, and thereby never gave himself fair play, the person of whom I am now about to speak—borne away in a perfectly opposite extreme—allowed his character to usurp and govern his abilities, frequently without either usefulness or aim. Thus, the one changed sides two or three times in his life, from that want of natural ardour which creates strong attachments; the other attacked and defended various parties with a furious zeal, upon which no one could rely, because it proceeded from the temporary caprice of a whimsical imagination, and not from the stedfast enthusiasm of any well-meditated conviction. With two or three qualities more, Cobbett would have been a very great man in the world; as it was, he made a great noise in it. But I pass from criticism to narrative.

II.

William Cobbett was born in the neighbourhood of Farnham, on the 9th of March, 1762. The remotest ancestor he had ever heard of was his grandfather, who had been a day labourer, and, according to the rustic habits of old times, worked with the same farmer from the day of his marriage to that of his death. The son, Cobbett's parent, was a man superior to the generality of persons in his station of life. He could not only read and write, but he knew also a little mathematics; under-

stood land surveying, was honest and industrious, and had thus risen from the position of labourer, a position in which he was born, to that of having labourers under him.

Cobbett's boyhood, I may say his childhood, was passed in the fields: first he was seen frightening the birds from the turnips, then weeding wheat, then leading a horse at harrowing barley, finally joining the reapers at harvest, driving the team, and holding the plough. His literary instruction was small, and only such as he could acquire at home. It was shrewdly asked by Dr. Johnson, "What becomes of all the clever schoolboys?" In fact, many of the boys clever at school are not heard of afterwards, because if they are docile they are also timid, and attend to the routine of education less from the love of learning than the want of animal spirits. Cobbett was not a boy of this kind. At the age of sixteen he determined to go to sea, but could not get a captain to take him. At the age of seventeen he quitted his home (having already, when much younger, done so in search of adventures), and without communicating his design to any one, started, dressed in his Sunday clothes, for the great city of London. Here, owing to the kind exertions of a passenger in the coach in which this his first journey was made, he got engaged after some time and trouble as under-clerk to an attorney (Mr. Holland), in Gray's Inn Lane.

It is natural enough that to a lad accustomed to fresh air, green fields, and out-of-door exercise, the close atmosphere, dull aspect, and sedentary position awaiting an attorney's under-clerk at Gray's Inn must have been hateful. But William Cobbett never once thought of escaping from what he called "an earthly hell" by a return to his home and friends. This would have been to confess himself beaten, which he never meant to be. On the contrary, rushing from one bold step to another still more so, he enlisted himself (1784) as a soldier in a regiment intended to serve in Nova Scotia. His father, though somewhat of his own stern and surly nature, begged, prayed, and remonstrated. But it was useless. The recruit, however, had some months to pass in England, since, peace having taken place, there was no

hurry in sending off the troops. These months he spent in Chatham, storing his brains with the lore of a circulating library, and his heart with love-dreams of the librarian's daughter.

To this period he owed what he always considered his most valuable acquisition, a knowledge of his native language; the assiduity with which he gave himself up to study, on this occasion, insured his success and evinced his character. He wrote out the whole of an English grammar two or three times; he got it by heart; he repeated it every morning and evening, and he imposed on himself the task of saying it over once every time that he mounted guard. "I learned grammar," he himself says, "when I was a private soldier on the pay of sixpence a day. The edge of my berth, or that of the guard-bed, was my seat to study on; my knapsack was my book-case, a bit of board lying on my lap was my writing-table, and the task did not demand anything like a year of my life." Such is will. In America, Cobbett remained as a soldier till the month of September, 1791, when his regiment was relieved and sent home. On the 19th of November, he obtained his discharge, after having served nearly eight years, never having once been disgraced, confined, or reprimanded, and having attained, owing to his zeal and intelligence, the rank of sergeant-major without having passed through the intermediate rank of sergeant.

The following was the order issued at Portsmouth on the day of his discharge:

"Portsmouth, 19th Dec. 1791.

"Sergeant-Major Cobbett having most pressingly applied for his discharge, at Major Lord Edward Fitzgerald's request, General Frederick has ordered Major Lord Edward Fitzgerald to return the Sergeant-Major thanks for his behaviour and conduct during the time of his being in the regiment, and Major Lord Edward adds his most hearty thanks to those of the General."

III.

At this period Cobbett married. Nobody has left us wiser sentiments or pithier sentences on the choice of a

wife. His own, the daughter of a sergeant of artillery, stationed like himself at New Brunswick, had been selected at once. He had met her two or three times, and found her pretty; beauty, indeed, he considered indispensable, but beauty alone would never have suited him. Industry, activity, energy, the qualities which he possessed, were those which he most admired, and the partner of his life was fixed upon when he found her, one morning before it was distinctly light, "scrubbing out a washing-tub before her father's door." "That's the girl for me," he said, and he kept to this resolution with a fortitude which the object of his attachment deserved and imitated.

The courtship was continued, and the assurance of reciprocated affection given; but before the union of hands could sanctify that of hearts, the artillery were ordered home for England. Cobbett, whose regiment was then at some distance from the spot where his betrothed was still residing, unable to have the satisfaction of a personal farewell, sent her 150 guineas, the whole amount of his savings, and begged her to use it—as he feared her residence with her father at Woolwich might expose her to bad company—in making herself comfortable in a small lodging with respectable people until his arrival. It was not until four years afterwards that he himself was able to quit America, and he then found the damsel he had so judiciously chosen not with her father, it is true, nor yet lodging in idleness, but as servant-of-all-work for five pounds a year, and at their first interview she put into his hands the 150 guineas which had been confided to her—untouched. Such a woman had no ordinary force of mind; and it has been frequently asserted that he who, once beyond his own threshold, was ready to contend with every government in the world, was, when at home, under what has been appropriately called the government of the petticoat.

Cobbett's marriage took place on the 3rd of February, 1792; that is, about ten weeks after his discharge; but having in March brought a very grave charge against some of the officers of his regiment, which charge, when a court-martial was summoned, he did not appear to support, he

was forced to quit England for France, where he remained till September, 1792, when he determined on trying his fortune in the United States.

IV.

On his arrival he settled in Philadelphia, and was soon joined by Mrs. Cobbett, who had not accompanied him out. His livelihood was at first procured by giving English lessons to French emigrants; and it is a fact not without interest that a celebrated person who figures amongst these sketches—M. de Talleyrand—wished to become one of his pupils. He refused, he says, to go to the ci-devant bishop's house, but adds, in his usual style, that the lame fiend hopped over this difficulty at once by offering to come to his (Cobbett's) house, an offer that was not accepted. About this time Doctor Priestley came to America. The enthusiasm with which the doctor was received roused the resentment of the British soldier, who moreover panted for a battle. He published then—though with some difficulty, booksellers objecting to the unpopularity of the subject, an objection at which the author was most indignant—a pamphlet called "Observations on Priestley's Emigration." This pamphlet, on account both of its ability and scurrility, made a sensation, and thus commenced the author's reputation, though it only added 1*s.* 7½*d.* to his riches. But he was abusing, he was abused. This was to be in his element, and he rose at once, so far as the power and peculiarity of his style were concerned, to a foremost place amongst political writers. This style had been formed at an early period of life, and perhaps unconsciously to himself.

"At eleven years of age," he says in an article in the *Evening Post*, calling upon the reformers to pay for returning him to Parliament, "my employment was clipping of box-edgings and weeding beds of flowers in the garden of the Bishop of Winchester at the castle of Farnham, my native town. I had always been fond of beautiful gardens, and a gardener who had just come from the King's gardens at Kew gave me such a description of them as made me instantly resolve to work in those

gardens. The next morning" (this is the early adventure I have previously spoken of), "without saying a word to any one, off I set, with no clothes except those upon my back, and with thirteen halfpence in my pocket. I found that I must go to Richmond, and I accordingly went on from place to place inquiring my way thither. A long day (it was in June) brought me to Richmond in the afternoon. Two pennyworth of bread and cheese and a pennyworth of small beer which I had on the road, and one halfpenny that I had lost somehow or other, left three pence in my pocket. With this for my whole fortune, I was trudging through Richmond in my blue smock-frock, and my red garters tied under my knees, when, staring about me, my eye fell upon a little book in a bookseller's window, on the outside of which was written 'The Tale of a Tub, price 3*d*.' The title was so odd that my curiosity was excited. I had the threepence; but then I could not have any supper. In I went and got the little book, which I was so impatient to read, that I got over into a field at the upper corner of Kew Gardens, where there stood a haystack. On the shady side of this I sat down to read. The book was so different from anything that I had ever read before, it was something so new to my mind, that, though I could not understand some parts of it, it delighted me beyond description, and produced what I have always considered a sort of birth of intellect.

"I read on until it was dark without any thought of supper or bed. When I could see no longer, I put my little book in my pocket and tumbled down by the side of the stack, where I slept till the birds in the Kew Gardens awakened me in the morning, when off I started to Kew, reading my little book. The singularity of my dress, the simplicity of my manner, my lively and confident air, and doubtless his own compassion besides, induced the gardener, who was a Scotchman, I remember, to give me victuals, find me lodging, and set me to work; and it was during the period that I was at Kew that George IV. and two of his brothers laughed at the oddness of my dress while I was sweeping the grass-plot round the foot of the Pagoda. The gardener, seeing me fond of books, lent me some

gardening books to read; but these I could not relish after my 'Tale of a Tub,' which I carried about with me wherever I went, and when I—at about twenty years old—lost it in a box that fell overboard in the Bay of Fundy, in North America, the loss gave me greater pain than I have since felt at losing thousands of pounds."

V.

Many had cause to remember this evening passed under a haystack at Kew. The genius of Swift engrafted itself naturally on an intellect so clear and a disposition so inclined to satire as that of the gardener's boy.

Cobbett's earliest writings are more especially tinged with the colouring of his master. Take for instance the following fable, which will at all times find a ready application:

"In a pot-shop, well stocked with wares of all sorts, a discontented, ill-formed pitcher unluckily bore the sway. One day, after the mortifying neglect of several customers, 'Gentlemen,' said he, addressing himself to his brown brethren in general—'gentlemen, with your permission, we are a set of tame fools, without ambition, without courage, condemned to the vilest uses; we suffer all without murmuring; let us dare to declare ourselves, and we shall soon see the difference. That superb ewer, which, like us, is but earth—these gilded jars, vases, china, and, in short, all those elegant nonsenses whose colour and beauty have neither weight nor solidity—must yield to our strength and give place to our superior merit.' This civic harangue was received with applause, and the pitcher, chosen president, became the organ of the assembly. Some, however, more moderate than the rest, attempted to calm the minds of the multitude; but all the vulgar utensils, which shall be nameless, were become intractable. Eager to vie with the bowls and the cups, they were impatient, almost to madness, to quit their obscure abodes to shine upon the table, kiss the lip, and ornament the cupboard.

"In vain did a wise water-jug—some say it was a platter—make them a long and serious discourse upon the

utility of their vocation. 'Those,' said he, 'who are destined to great employments are rarely the most happy. We are all of the same clay, 'tis true, but He who made us formed us for different functions; one is for ornament, another for use. The posts the least important are often the most necessary. Our employments are extremely different, and so are our talents.'

"This had a most wonderful effect; the most stupid began to open their ears; perhaps it would have succeeded, if a grease-pot had not cried out in a decisive tone: 'You reason like an ass—to the devil with you and your silly lessons.' Now the scale was turned again; all the horde of pans and pitchers applauded the superior eloquence and reasoning of the grease-pot. In short, they determined on an enterprise; but a dispute arose—who should be the chief? Every one would command, but no one obey. It was then you might have heard a clatter; all put themselves in motion at once, and so wisely and with so much vigour were their operations conducted, that the whole was soon changed—not into china, but into rubbish."

VI.

The tendency of this tale is manifest. It was in opposition to the democratic spirit mainly because such was the ruling spirit of the country in which the author had come to reside—a democratic spirit which has since developed itself more fully, but which then, though predominant, had a powerful and respectable party to contend against.

The constitution of the United States had indeed perfectly satisfied none of its framers. Franklin had declared that he consented to it, not as the best, but as the best that he could then hope for. Washington expressed the same opinion. It necessarily gave birth to two parties, which for a time were held together by the position, the abilities, and the reputation of the first president of the new Republic. They existed, however, in his government itself, where Jefferson represented the Democratic faction, and Hamilton the Federal or Conservative one. To the latter the president—though holding the balance with apparent impartiality—belonged; for he was an English

gentleman, of a firm and moderate character, and, moreover, wished that the government of which he was the head should be possessed of an adequate force. The great movement, however, in France—which he was almost the only person to judge from the first with calm discernment—overbore his views and complicated his situation. Determined that the United States should take only a neutral position in the European contest, he was assailed on all sides—as a tyrant, because he wished for order—as a partisan of Great Britain, because he wished for peace. To those among the native Americans, who dreamt impossible theories, or desired inextricable confusion, were joined all the foreign intriguers, who, banished from their own countries, had no hopes of returning there but as enemies and invaders. "I am called everything," said Washington, "even a Nero."* His continuance in the presidency, to which he was incited by some persons to pretend for a third time, had indeed become incompatible with his character and honour.

The respect which he had so worthily merited and so long inspired was on the wane. The cabinet with which he had commenced his government was broken up; his taxes, in some provinces, were refused; a treaty he had concluded with England was pretty generally condemned; and as he retired to Mount Vernon, the democratic party saw that approaching triumph which the election of their leader to the presidency was soon about to achieve. The cry against Great Britain was fiercer; the shout for Jefferson was louder than it had ever been before.

VII.

At this time Cobbett, then better known as Peter Porcupine, a name which on becoming an author he had assumed, and which had at least the merit of representing his character appropriately, having quarrelled with a legion of booksellers, determined to set up in the bookselling line for himself; and in the spring of 1796, he took a house in Second Street for that purpose.

Though he was not so universally obnoxious then as he

* Letter to Mr. Taylor. "Writings," vol. xii. s. 212.

subsequently became, his enemies were already many and violent—his friends warm, but few. These last feared for him in the course he was entering upon; they advised him, therefore, to be prudent—to do nothing, at all events, on commencing business, that might attract public indignation; and, above all, not to put up any aristocratic portraits in his windows.

Cobbett's plan was decided. His shop opened on a Monday, and he spent all the previous Sunday in so preparing it that, when he took down his shutters on the morning following, the people of Philadelphia were actually aghast at the collection of prints, arrayed in their defiance, including the effigies of George III., which had never been shown at any window since the rebellion. From that moment the newspapers were filled, and the shops placarded, with "A Blue Pill for Peter Porcupine," "A Pill for Peter Porcupine," "A Roaster for Peter Porcupine," "A Picture of Peter Porcupine." Peter Porcupine had become a person of decided consideration and importance.

"Dear father," says the writer who had assumed this name, in one of his letters home, "when you used to set me off to work in the morning, dressed in my blue smock-frock and woollen spatterdashes, with a bag of bread and cheese and a bottle of small beer over my shoulder, on the little crook that my godfather gave me, little did you imagine that I should one day become so great a man."

VIII.

Paine's arrival in America soon furnished fresh matter for invective. Paine, like Priestley, was a Republican; and was, like Priestley, hailed with popular enthusiasm by the Republicans. Cobbett attacked this new idol, therefore, as he had done the preceding one, and even with still greater virulence. This carried him to the highest pitch of unpopularity which it was possible to attain in the United States, and it was now certain that no opportunity would be lost of restraining his violence or breaking his pen. In August, 1797, accordingly, he was indicted for a libel against the Spanish minister and his court; but the bill was ignored by a majority of one; and indeed, it

would have been difficult for an American jury to have punished an Englishman for declaring the Spanish king at that time "the tool of France." A question was now raised as to whether the obnoxious writer should not be turned out of the United States, under the Alien Act.

This having been objected to by the Attorney General, a new course of prosecution was adopted. Nearly all Cobbett's writings were brought together into one mass, and he was charged with having published throughout them libels against almost every liberal man of note in America, France, and England. Under such a charge he was obliged to find recognisances for his good behaviour to the amount of 4000 dollars, and it was hoped by a diligent search into his subsequent writings to convict him of having forfeited these recognisances.

His enemies, indeed, might safely count on his getting into further troubles; nor had they long to wait. A Doctor Rush having at this time risen into great repute by a system of purging and bleeding, with which he had attempted to stop the yellow fever, Cobbett, who could ill tolerate another's reputation, even in medicine, darted forth against this new candidate for public favour with his usual vigour of abuse. "Can the Rush grow up without mire, or the flag without water?" was his exclamation, and down went his ruthless and never-pausing flail on poor Dr. Rush's birth, parentage, manners, character, medicine, and everything that was his by nature, chance, or education. This could not long continue; Cobbett was again indicted for a libel.

In tyrannies justice is administered unscrupulously in the case of a political enemy; in democracies also law must frequently be controlled by vulgar prejudice and popular passion. This was seen in the present case. The defendant pleaded, in the first place, that his trial should be removed from the Court of the State of Pennsylvania to that of the United States. It was generally thought that as an alien he could claim to have his cause thus transferred. This claim, however, was refused by the chief justice, whom he had recklessly affronted; and the trial coming on when a jury was pretty certain to be

hostile, Cobbett was assessed in damages to the amount of 5000 dollars; nor was much consolation to be derived from the fact that on the 14th December, the day on which he was condemned for libelling Rush, General Washington died, in some degree the victim of that treatment which the libelled doctor had prescribed.

The costs of the suit he had lost, added to the fine which the adverse sentence had imposed, made altogether a considerable sum. Cobbett was nearly ruined, but he bore himself up with a stout heart; and for a moment turning round at bay faced his enemies, and determined yet to remain in the United States. But on second thoughts, without despairing of his fortunes, he resolved to seek them elsewhere; and set sail for England. This he did on the 1st of June, 1800; shaking the dust from his feet on what he then stigmatised as "that infamous land, where judges become felons, and felons judges."

Part II.

FROM JUNE 1ST, 1800, TO MARCH 28TH, 1817, WHEN, HAVING ALTOGETHER CHANGED HIS POLITICS, HE RETURNS TO AMERICA.

Starts a paper, by title *The Porcupine*, which he had made famous in America.—Begins as a Tory.—Soon verges towards opposition.—Abandons *Porcupine* and commences *Register*.—Prosecuted for libel.—Changes politics, and becomes radical.—Prosecuted again for libel.—Convicted and imprisoned. —Industry and activity though confined in Newgate.—Sentence expires. —Released.—Power as a writer increases.—Government determined to put him down.—Creditors pressing.—He returns to the United States.

I.

The space Cobbett filled in the public mind of his native land was at this time, 1800, considerable. Few, in fact, have within so brief a period achieved so remarkable a career, or gained under similar circumstances an equal reputation. The boy from the plough had become the soldier, and distinguished himself, so far as his birth and term of service at that time admitted, in the military profession; the uneducated soldier had become the writer; and, as the advocate of monarchical principles in a Republican state, had shown a power and a resolution which had raised him to the position of an antagonist to the whole people amongst whom he had been residing. There was Cobbett on one side of the arena, and all the democracy of democratic America on the other!

He now returned to the Old World and the land for which he had been fighting the battle. His name had preceded him. George III. admired him as his champion; Lord North hailed him as the greatest political reasoner of his time (Burke being amongst his contemporaries); Mr. Windham—the elegant, refined, classical, manly, but whimsical Mr. Windham—was in raptures at his genius;

and though the English people at this time were beginning to be a little less violent than they had been in their hatred of France and America, the English writer who despised Frenchmen and insulted Americans, was still a popular character in England.

Numerous plans of life were open to him; that which he chose was the one for which he was most fitting, and to which he could most easily and naturally adapt himself. He again became editor of a public paper, designated by the name he had rendered famous, and called *The Porcupine.*

The principles on which this paper was to be conducted were announced with spirit and vigour. "The subjects of a British king," said Cobbett, "like the sons of every provident and tender father, never know his value till they feel the want of his protection. In the days of youth and ignorance I was led to believe that comfort, freedom, and virtue were exclusively the lot of Republicans. A very short trial convinced me of my error, admonished me to repent of my folly, and urged me to compensate for the injustice of the opinion which I had conceived. During an eight years' absence from my country, I was not an unconcerned spectator of her perils, nor did I listen in silence to the slander of her enemies.

"Though divided from England by the ocean, though her gay fields were hidden probably for ever from my view, still her happiness and her glory were the objects of my constant solicitude. I rejoiced at her victories, I mourned at her defeats; her friends were my friends, her foes were my foes. Once more returned, once more under the safeguard of that sovereign who watched over me in my infancy, and the want of whose protecting arm I have so long had reason to lament, I feel an irresistible desire to communicate to my countrymen the fruit of my experience; to show them the injurious and degrading consequences of discontent, disloyalty, and innovation; to convince them that they are the first as well as happiest of the human race, and above all to warn them against the arts of those ambitious and perfidious demagogues who could willingly reduce them to a level with the cheated

slaves, in the bearing of whose yoke I had the mortification to share."

II.

The events even at this time were preparing, which in their series of eddies whirled the writer we have been quoting into the midst of those very ambitious and perfidious demagogues whom he here denounces. Nor was this notable change, under all the circumstances which surrounded it, very astonishing. In the first place, the party in power, after greeting him on his arrival with a welcome which, perhaps, was more marked by curiosity than courtesy, did little to gratify their champion's vanity, or to advance his interests. With that indifference usually shown by official men in our country to genius, if it is unaccompanied by aristocratical or social influence, they allowed the great writer to seek his fortunes as he had sought them hitherto, pen in hand, without aid or patronage.

In the second place, the part which Mr. Pitt took on the side of Catholic emancipation was contrary to all Cobbett's antecedent prejudices: and then Mr. Pitt had treated Cobbett with coolness one day when they met at Mr. Windham's. Thus a private grievance was added to a public one.

The peace with France—a peace for which he would not illuminate, having his windows smashed by the mob in consequence—disgusted him yet more with Mr Addington, whose moderate character he heartily despised; and not the less so for that temporising statesman's inclination rather to catch wavering Whigs than to satisfy discontented Tories. These reasons partly suggested his giving up the daily journal he had started (called, as I have said, *The Porcupine*), and commencing the *Weekly Political Register*, which he conducted with singular ability against every party in the country. I say against every party in the country; for, though he was still, no doubt, a stout advocate of kingly government, he did not sufficiently admit, for the purposes of his personal safety, that the king's government was the king's ministers. Thus, no doubt to his great surprise, he found that he, George III.'s most devoted servant, was summoned one morning to

answer before the law for maliciously intending to move and incite the liege subjects of his Majesty to hatred and contempt of his royal authority.

The libel made to bear this forced interpretation was taken from letters in November and December, 1803, signed "Juverna," that appeared in the *Register*, and were not flattering to the government of Ireland.

III.

If we turn to the state of that country at this time, we shall find that the resignation of Mr. Pitt, and the hopeless situation of the Catholics, had naturally created much discontent. Mr. Addington, it is true, was anything but a severe minister; he did nothing to rouse the passions of the Irish, but he did nothing to win the heart, excite the imagination, or gain the affection of that sensitive people. The person he had nominated to the post of Lord Lieutenant was a fair type of his own ministry, that person being a sensible, good-natured man, with nothing brilliant or striking in his manner or abilities, but carrying into his high office the honest intention to make the course he was enjoined to pursue as little obnoxious as possible to those whom he could not expect to please. In this manner his government, though mild and inoffensive, neither captivated the wavering nor overawed the disaffected; and under it was hatched, by a young and visionary enthusiast (Mr. Emmett), a conspiracy, which, though contemptible as the means of overturning the established authority, was accompanied at its explosion by the murder of the Lord Chief Justice, and the exposure of Dublin to pillage and flames. The enemies of ministers naturally seized on so fair an occasion for assailing them, and Cobbett, who held a want of energy to be at all times worse than the want of all other qualities, put his paper at their disposal.

In the present instance, the writer of "Juverna's" letters, calling to his aid the old story of the wooden horse which carried the Greeks within the walls of Troy, and exclaiming, "Equo ne credite Teucri!" compared the Irish administration, so simple and innocuous in its outward appearance, but containing within its bosom, as

he said, all the elements of mischief, to that famous and fatal prodigy of wood; and after complimenting the Lord Lieutenant on having a head made of the same harmless material as the wooden horse itself, thus flatteringly proceeded: "But who is this Lord Hardwicke? I have discovered him to be in rank an earl, in manners a gentleman, in morals a good father and a kind husband, and that, moreover, he has a good library in St. James's Square. Here I should have been for ever stopped, if I had not by accident met with one Mr. Lindsay, a Scotch parson, since become (and I am sure it must be by Divine Providence, for it would be impossible to account for it by secondary causes) Bishop of Killaloe. From this Mr. Lindsay I further learned that my Lord Hardwicke was celebrated for understanding the mode and method of fattening sheep as well as any man in Cambridgeshire."

The general character of the attack on Lord Hardwicke may be judged of by the above quotation, and was certainly not of a very malignant nature. It sufficed, however, to procure a hostile verdict; and the Editor of the *Political Register* was declared "Guilty of having attempted to subvert the King's authority."

This, however, was not all. Mr. Plunkett, then Solicitor-General for Ireland, had pleaded against Mr. Emmett, whose father he had known, with more bitterness than perhaps was necessary, since the culprit brought forward no evidence in his favour, and did not even attempt a defence. Mr. Plunkett, moreover, had himself but a short time previously expressed rather violent opinions, and, when speaking of the Union, had gone so far as to say that, if it passed into a law, no Irishman would be bound to obey it. In short, the position in which he stood was one which required great delicacy and forbearance, and delicacy and forbearance he had not shown. "Juverna" thus speaks of him:

"If any one man could be found of whom a young but unhappy victim of the justly offended laws of his country had, in the moment of his conviction and sentence, uttered the following apostrophe: 'That viper, whom my father nourished, he it is whose principles and doctrines now

drag me to my grave; and he it is who is now brought forward as my prosecutor, and who, by an unheard-of exercise of the royal prerogative, has wantonly lashed with a speech to evidence the dying son of his former friend, when that dying son had produced no evidence, had made no defence, but, on the contrary, acknowledged the charge and submitted to his fate'—Lord Kenyon would have turned with horror from such a scene, in which, if guilt were in one part punished, justice in the whole drama was confounded, humanity outraged, and loyalty insulted."

These observations, made in a far more rancorous spirit than those relating to Lord Hardwicke, could not fail to be bitterly felt by the Solicitor-General, who was probably obliged, in deference to Irish opinion, to prosecute the editor of the paper they appeared in.

He did so, and obtained 500*l.* damages.

Luckily for Cobbett, however, he escaped punishment in both suits; for the real author of these attacks, Mr. Johnson, subsequently Judge Johnson, having been discovered, or having discovered himself, Cobbett was left without further molestation. But an impression had been created in his mind. He had fought the battle of loyalty in America against a host of enemies to the loss of his property, and even at the hazard of his life. Shouts of triumph had hailed him from the British shores. The virulence of his invectives, the coarseness of his epithets, the exaggeration of his opinions, were all forgotten and forgiven when he wrote the English language out of England. He came to his native country; he advocated the same doctrines, and wrote in the same style; his heart was still as devoted to his king, and his wishes as warm for the welfare of his country; but, because it was stated in his journal that Lord Hardwicke was an excellent sheep-feeder, and Mr. Plunkett a viper—(a disagreeable appellation, certainly, but one soft and gentle in comparison with many which he had bestowed, fifty times over, on the most distinguished writers, members of Congress, judges and lawyers in the United States—without the regard and esteem of his British patrons being one jot

abated)—he had been stigmatised as a traitor and condemned to pay five hundred pounds as a libeller.

He did not recognise, in these proceedings, the beauties of the British Constitution, nor the impartial justice which he had always maintained when in America, was to be found in loyal old England. He did not see why his respect for his sovereign prevented him from saying or letting it be said that a Lord Lieutenant of Ireland was a very ordinary man, nor that a Solicitor-General of Ireland had made a very cruel and ungenerous speech, when the facts thus stated were perfectly true. The Tory leaders had done nothing to gain him as a partisan, they had done much that jarred with his general notions on politics, and finally they treated him as a political foe. The insult, for such he deemed it, was received with a grim smile of defiance, and grievous was the loss which Conservative opinions sustained when those who represented them drove the most powerful controversialist of his day into the opposite ranks.

Nor can the value of his support be estimated merely by the injury inflicted by his hostility. When Cobbett departed from his consistency, he forfeited a great portion of his influence. With his marvellous skill in exciting the popular passions in favour of the ideas he espoused; with his nicknames, with his simple, sterling, and at all times powerful eloquence, it is difficult to limit the effect he might have produced amongst the classes to which he belonged, and which with an improved education were beginning to acquire greater power, if acquainted with their habits and warmed by their passions, he had devoted his self-taught intellect to the defence of ancient institutions and the depreciation of modern ideas.

But official gentlemen then were even more official than they are now; and fancying that every man in office was a great man, every one out of it a small one, their especial contempt was reserved for a public writer. If, however, such persons, the scarecrows of genius, were indifferent to Cobbett's defection, they whose standard he joined hailed with enthusiasm his conversion.

These were not the Whigs. Cobbett's was one of those

natures which never did things by halves. Sir Francis Burdett, Mr. Hunt, Major Cartwright, and a set of men who propounded theories of parliamentary reform—which no one, who was at that time considered a practical statesman, deemed capable of realization—were his new associates and admirers.

Nor was his change a mere change in political opinion. It was, unfortunately, a change in political morality. The farmer's son had not been educated at a learned university—having his youthful mind nourished and strengthened by great examples of patriotism and consistency, drawn from Greece and Rome:—he was educating himself by modern examples from the world in which he was living, and there he found statesmen slow to reward the advocacy of their public opinions, but quick to avenge any attack on their personal vanity or individual interests. It struck him then that their principles were like the signs which innkeepers stick over their tap-rooms, intended to catch the traveller's attention, and induce him to buy their liquors; but having no more real signification than "St. George and the Dragon," or the "Blue Boar," or the "Flying Serpent;" hence concluding that one sign might be pulled down and the other put up. to suit the taste of the customers, or the speculation of the landlord.

And now begins a perfectly new period in his life. Up to this date he had always been one and the same individual. Every corner of his being had been apparently filled with the same loyal hatred to Frenchmen and Democrats. He had loved, in every inch of him, the king and the church, and the wooden walls of Old England. "Who will say," he exclaims in America, "that an Englishman ought not to despise all the nations in the world? For my part I do, and that most heartily." What he here says of every one of a different nation from his own, he had said, and said constantly, of every one of a different political creed from his own, and his own political creed had as yet never varied. But consistency and Cobbett here separated. Not only was his new self a complete and constant contradiction with his old self—this was to be expected: but whereas his old self was one solid

block, his new self was a piece of tesselated workmanship, in which were patched together all sorts of materials of all sorts of colours. I do not mean to say that, having taken to the liberal side in politics, he ever turned round again and became violent on the opposite side. But his liberalism had no code. He recognised no fixed friends—no definite opinions. The notions he advocated were such as he selected for the particular day of the week on which he was writing, and which he considered himself free on the following day to dispute with those who adopted them. As to his alliances, they were no more closely woven into his existence than his doctrines; and he stood forth distinguished for being dissatisfied with everything, and quarrelling with every one.

IV.

The first tilt which he made from the new side of the ring where he had now taken his stand was against Mr. Pitt—whom it was not difficult towards the close of his life to condemn, for the worst fault which a minister can commit—being unfortunate. Cobbett's next assault—on the demand of the Whigs for an increase of allowance to the king's younger sons—was against Royalty itself, its pensions, governorships, and rangerships, which he called "its cheeseparings and candle-ends!" Some Republicans on the other side of the Atlantic must have rubbed their spectacles when they read these effusions; but the editor of the *Register* was indifferent to provoking censure, and satisfied with exciting astonishment. Besides, we may fairly admit, that, when the King demanded that his private property in the funds should be free from taxation (showing he had such property), and at the same time called upon the country to increase the allowances of his children, he did much to try the loyalty of the nation, and gave Cobbett occasion to observe that a rich man did not ask the parish to provide for his offspring. "I am," said he, "against these things, not because I am a Republican, but because I am for monarchical government, and consequently adverse to all that gives Republicans a fair occasion for sneering at it."

In the meantime his periodical labours did not prevent

his undertaking works of a more solid description; and in 1806 he announced the "Parliamentary Register," which was to contain all the recorded proceedings of Parliament from the earliest times; and was in the highest degree useful, since the reader had previously to wade through a hundred volumes of journals in order to know anything of the history of the two Houses of Parliament. These more serious labours did not, however, interfere with his weekly paper, which had a large circulation, and, though without any party influence (for Cobbett attacked all parties), gave him a great deal of personal power and importance. "It came up," says the author, proudly, "like a grain of mustard-seed, and like a grain of mustard-seed it has spread over the whole civilised world." Meanwhile, this peasant-born politician was uniting rural pursuits with literary labours, and becoming, in the occupation of a farm at Botley, a prominent agriculturist and a sort of intellectual authority in his neighbourhood. From this life, which no one has described with a pen more pregnant with the charm and freshness of green fields and woods, he was torn by another prosecution for libel.

V.

The following paragraph had appeared in the *Courier* paper:

"London, Saturday, July 1st, 1809.

"Motto.—The mutiny amongst the Local Militia, which broke out at Ely, was *fortunately* suppressed on Wednesday by the arrival of four squadrons of the German Legion Cavalry from Bury, under the command of General Auckland.

"Five of the ringleaders were tried by a court-martial, and sentenced to receive *five hundred lashes each*, part of which punishment they received on Wednesday, and a part was remitted. A stoppage for their knapsacks was the ground of complaint which excited this mutinous spirit, and occasioned the men to surround their officers and demand what they deemed their arrears. The first division of the German Legion halted yesterday at Newmarket on their return to Bury."

On this paragraph Cobbett made the subjoining observations:

"'Summary of politics. Local Militia and German Legion.' See the motto, English reader, see the motto, and then do, pray, recollect all that has been said about the way in which Bonaparte raises his soldiers. Well done, Lord Castlereagh! This is just what it was thought that your plan would produce. Well said, Mr. Huskisson! It was really not without reason you dwelt with so much earnestness upon the great utility of the foreign troops, whom Mr. Wardle appeared to think of no utility at all. Poor gentleman! he little thought how great a genius might find employment for such troops; he little imagined they might be made the means of compelling Englishmen to submit to that sort of discipline which is so conducive to producing in them a disposition to defend the country at the risk of their lives. Let Mr. Wardle look at my motto, and then say whether the German soldiers are of no use. *Five hundred lashes each!* Ay, that is right; flog them! flog them! flog them; they deserve it, and a great deal more! They deserve a flogging at every meal time. Lash them daily! Lash them daily! What! shall the rascals dare to *mutiny*, and that, too, when the *German* Legion is so near at hand? Lash them! Lash them! Lash them! they deserve it. Oh! yes, they deserve a double-tailed cat. Base dogs! what, mutiny for the sake of the price of a knapsack! Lash them! flog them! base rascals! mutiny for the price of a goat-skin, and then upon the appearance of the German soldiers they take a flogging as quietly as so many trunks of trees."

VI.

The attack on the Hanoverian troops, who had nothing to do with the question as to whether the militiamen were flogged justly or not, was doubtless most illiberal and unfair. Those troops simply did their duty, as any other disciplined troops would have done, in seeing a superior's order executed. It was not their fault if they were employed on this service; neither were they in our country or our army under ordinary circumstances. They had

lost their own land for fighting our battles; they were in our army because they would not serve in the army of the enemy.

But we can hardly expect newspaper writers to be more logical and just than forensic advocates. A free press is not a good unmixed with evil; there are arguments against it, as there are arguments for it; but where it is admitted as an important part of a nation's institutions, this admission includes, as I conceive, the permission to state one side of a question in the most telling manner, the corrective being the juxtaposition of the other side of the question stated with an equal intent to captivate, and perhaps to mislead.

Two years' imprisonment, and a fine of £1000 only wanted the gentle accompaniment of ear-cropping to have done honour to the Star Chamber; for, to a man who had a newspaper and a farm to carry on, imprisonment threatened to consummate the ruin which an exorbitant fine was well calculated to commence.

Cobbett was accused of yielding to the heaviness of the blow, and of offering the abandonment of his journal as the price of his forgiveness. I cannot agree with those who said that such an offer would have been an unparalleled act of baseness. In giving up his journal, Cobbett was not necessarily giving up his opinions. Every one who wages war unsuccessfully retains the right of capitulation. A writer is no more obliged to rot uselessly in a gaol for the sake of his cause, than a general is obliged to fight a battle without a chance of victory for the sake of his country. A man, even if a hero, is not obliged to be a martyr. Cobbett's disgraceful act was not in making the proposal of which he was accused, but in denying most positively and repeatedly that he had ever made it; for it certainly seems pretty clear, amidst a good deal of contradictory evidence, that he did authorize Mr. Reeves, of the Alien Office, to promise that the *Register* should drop if he was not brought up for judgment; and if a Mr. Wright, who was a sort of factotum to Cobbett at the time, can be believed, the farewell was actually written, and only withdrawn when the negotiation

was known to have failed. At all events, no indulgence being granted to the offender, he turned round and faced fortune with his usual hardihood. In no portion of his life, indeed, did he show greater courage—in none does the better side of his character come out in brighter relief than when, within the gloomy and stifling walls of Newgate, he carried on his farming, conducted his paper, educated his children, and waged war (his most natural and favourite pursuit) against his enemies with as gay a courage as could have been expected from him in sight of the yellow cornfields, and breathing the pure air he loved so well.

"Now, then," he says, in describing this period of his life, "the book-learning was forced upon us. I had a farm in hand; it was necessary that I should be constantly informed of what was doing. I gave all the orders, whether as to purchases, sales, ploughing, sowing, breeding—in short, with regard to everything, and the things were in endless number and variety, and always full of interest. My eldest son and daughter could now write well and fast. One or the other of these was always at Botley, and I had with me—having hired the best part of the keeper's house—one or two besides, either their brother or sister. We had a hamper, with a lock and two keys, which came up once a week or oftener, bringing me fruit and all sorts of country fare. This hamper, which was always at both ends of the line looked for with the most lively interest, became our school. It brought me a journal of labours, proceedings, and occurrences, written on paper of shape and size uniform, and so contrived as to margins as to admit of binding. The journal used, when my eldest son was the writer, to be interspersed with drawings of our dogs, colts, or anything that he wanted me to have a correct idea of. The hamper brought me plants, herbs, and the like, that I might see the size of them; and almost every one sent his or her most beautiful flowers, the earliest violets and primroses and cowslips and bluebells, the earliest twigs of trees, and, in short, everything that they thought calculated to delight me. The moment the hamper arrived, I—casting aside everything else—set

to work to answer every question, to give new directions, and to add anything likely to give pleasure at Botley.

"Every hamper brought one letter, as they called it, if not more, from every child, and to every letter I wrote an answer, sealed up and sent to the party, being sure that that was the way to produce other and better letters; for though they could not read what I wrote, and though their own consisted at first of mere scratches, and afterwards, for a while, of a few words written down for them to imitate, I always thanked them for their pretty letter, and never expressed any wish to see them write better, but took care to write in a very neat and plain hand myself, and to do up my letter in a very neat manner.

"Thus, while the ferocious tigers thought I was doomed to incessant mortification, and to rage that must extinguish my mental powers, I found in my children, and in their spotless and courageous and affectionate mother, delights to which the callous hearts of those tigers were strangers. 'Heaven first taught letters for some wretch's aid.' How often did this line of Pope occur to me when I opened the little fuddling letters from Botley. This correspondence occupied a good part of my time. I had all the children with me, turn and turn about; and in order to give the boys exercise, and to give the two eldest an opportunity of beginning to learn French, I used for a part of the two years to send them for a few hours a day to an abbé, who lived in Castle Street, Holborn. All this was a great relaxation to my mind; and when I had to return to my literary labours, I returned fresh and cheerful, full of vigour, and full of hope of finally seeing my unjust and merciless foes at my feet, and that, too, without caring a straw on whom their fall might bring calamity, so that my own family were safe, because—say what any one might—the community, taken as a whole, had suffered this thing to be done unto us.

"The paying of the workpeople, the keeping of the accounts, the referring to books, the writing and reading of letters, this everlasting mixture of amusement with book-learning, made me, almost to my own surprise, find at the end of two years that I had a parcel of scholars

growing up about me, and, long before the end of the time, I had dictated my *Register* to my two eldest children. Then there was copying out of books, which taught spelling correctly. The calculations about the farming affairs forced arithmetic upon us; the *use*, the *necessity* of the thing, led to the study.

"By and by we had to look into the laws, to know what to do about the highways, about the game, about the poor, and all rural and parochial affairs.

"I was, indeed, by the fangs of government defeated in my fondly-cherished project of making my sons farmers on their own land, and keeping them from all temptation to seek vicious and enervating enjoyments; but those fangs—merciless as they had been—had not been able to prevent me from laying in for their lives, a store of useful information, habits of industry, care, and sobriety, and a taste for innocent, healthful, and manly pleasures. The fiends had made me and them penniless, but had not been able to take from us our health, or our mental possessions, and these were ready for application as circumstances might ordain."

VII.

At length, however, Cobbett's punishment was over; and his talents still conferred on him sufficient consideration to have the event celebrated by a dinner, at which Sir Francis Burdett presided. This compliment paid, Cobbett returned to Botley and his old pursuits, literary and agricultural. The idea of publishing cheap newspapers, under the title of "Twopenny Trash," and which, not appearing as periodicals, escaped the Stamp Tax, now added considerably to his power; and by extending the circulation of his writings to a new class,—the mechanic and artisan, in urban populations,—made that power dangerous at a period when great distress produced general discontent—a discontent of which the government rather tried to suppress the exhibition, than to remove the causes. Nor did Cobbett speak untruly when he said, that the suspension of the Habeas Corpus, and the passing of the celebrated "Six Acts," in the year 1817, were more directed against himself than against all the other writers

of sedition put together. But notwithstanding the exultation which this position gave him for a moment, he soon saw that it was one which he should not be able to maintain, and that the importance he had temporarily acquired had no durable foundation. He had no heart, moreover, for another midsummer's dream in Newgate. Nor was this all. Though he had not wanted friends or partisans, who had furnished him with pecuniary aid, his expenses had gone far beyond his means; and I may mention as one of the most extraordinary instances of this singular person's influence, that the debts he had at this time been allowed to contract amounted to no less than £34,000, a sum he could not hope to repay.

For the first time his ingenuity furnished him with no resource, or his usual audacity failed him; and with a secrecy, for which the state of his circumstances accounted, he made a sudden bolt (the 28th of March, 1817) for the United States, informing his countrymen that they were too lukewarm in their own behalf to justify the perils he incurred for their sakes; and observing to his creditors that, as they had not resisted the persecutions from which his losses had arisen, they must be prepared to share with his family the consequences of his ruin.

Sir Francis Burdett had been for many years, as we have seen, his friend and protector, and had but recently presided at the festival which commemorated his release from confinement; but Sir Francis Burdett was amongst those from whom Cobbett had borrowed pretty largely; and though the wealthy baronet could scarcely have expected this money to be repaid, yet, having advanced it to a political partisan, he was not altogether pleased at seeing his money and his partisan slip through his fingers at the same time; and made some remarks which, on reaching Cobbett's ears, irritated a vanity that never slept, and was only too ready to avenge itself by abuse equally ungrateful and unwise

Part III.

FROM QUITTING ENGLAND IN 1817 TO HIS DEATH IN 1835.

Settles on Long Island.—Professes at first great satisfaction.—Takes a farm. —Writes his Grammar.—Gets discontented.—His premises burnt.—He returns to England, and carries Paine's bones with him.—The bones do not succeed.—Tries twice to be returned to Parliament.—Is not elected.—Becomes a butcher at Kensington.—Fails there and is a bankrupt.—His works from 1820 to 1826.—Extracts.—New prosecution.—Acquitted.—Comes at last into Parliament for Oldham.—Character as a speaker.—Dies.—General summing up.

I.

The epoch of Cobbett's flight from England was decidedly the one most fatal to his character. So long as a man pays his bills, or sticks to his party, he has some one to speak in his favour; but a runaway from his party and his debts, whatever the circumstances that lead to his doing either, must give up the idea of leaving behind him any one disposed to say a word in his defence. Cobbett probably did give up this idea, and, having satisfied himself by declaring that the overthrow of the regular laws and constitution of England had rendered his person as a public writer insecure, and his talents unprofitable, in his native country, seemed disposed to a divorce from the old world, and to a reconciliation with the new. At all events, he viewed America with very different eyes from those with which he had formerly looked at it. The weather was the finest he had ever seen; the ground had no dirt; the air had no flies; the people were civil, not servile; there were none of the poor and wretched habitations which sicken the sight at the outskirts of cities and towns in England; the progress of wealth, ease, and enjoyment evinced by the regular increase of the size of the farmers' buildings, spoke in praise of the system of government under which it had taken place; and, to crown all, four

Yankee mowers weighed down eight English ones! During the greater part of the time that these encomiums were written, Cobbett was living at a farm he had taken on Hampstead Plains, Long Island, where he wrote his grammar, the only amusing grammar in the world, and of which, when it was sent to his son in England, 10,000 copies were sold in one month.

A year, however, after his arrival at Long Island, a fire broke out on his premises and destroyed them. The misfortune was not, perhaps, an untimely one.

Whatever Cobbett might have been able to do in the United States as a farmer, he did not seem to have a chance there of playing any part as a politician. He was not even taken up as a "lion," for his sudden preference for Republican institutions created no sensation amongst men who were now all heart and soul Republicans. He was not a hero; and he could not, consistently with his present doctrines, attempt to become a martyr. He had, to be sure, the satisfaction of saying bitter things about the tyranny established in his native land; but these produced no effect in America, where abuse of monarchical government was thought quite natural, and he did not see the effect they produced at home. Moreover, they did not after all produce much effect even there. His periodical writings were like wine meant to be drunk on the spot, and lost a great deal of their flavour when sent across the wide waters of the ocean. They were, indeed, essentially written for the day, and for the passions and purposes of the day. Arriving after the cause which had produced them had ceased to excite the public mind, their sound and fury were like the smoke and smell of an explosion without its noise or its powers of destruction. Cobbett saw this clearly, though even to his own children he would never confess it.

II.

The condition of England, moreover, at this moment excited his attention, perhaps his hopes. A violent policy can never be a lasting one. The government was beginning to wear out the overstretched authority that had been confided to it, and the community was beginning to

feel that you should not make (to use the words of Mr. Burke) "the extreme remedies of the State its daily bread." On the other hand, the general distress, which had created the discontent that these extreme remedies had been employed to suppress, was in no wise diminished. The sovereign and the administration were unpopular, the people generally ignorant and undisciplined, neither the one nor the other understanding the causes of the prevalent disaffection, nor having any idea as to how it should be dealt with.

Such is the moment undoubtedly for rash or designing men to propagate wild theories; and such is also the moment when bold men, guided by better motives, will find, in a country where constitutional liberty cannot be entirely destroyed, the means of turning the oppressive measures of an unscrupulous minister against himself. With the one there was a chance of war against all government, with the other a chance of resistance against bad government. The revolutionist and the patriot were both stirring, whilst a vague idea prevailed amongst many, neither patriots nor revolutionists, that our society was about to be exposed to one of those great convulsions which overturn thrones and change the destiny of empires.

Cobbett was probably too shrewd to look on such a crisis as a certainty; but he was very probably sanguine enough to build schemes on it as a possibility. Besides, there were strife and contention in the great towns, and murmurings in the smaller hamlets; and, where there were strife and contention and murmurings, such a man as Cobbett could not fail to find a place and to produce an effect. This was sufficient to make him feel restlessly anxious to reappear on the stage he had so abruptly quitted. But he was essentially an actor, and disposed to study the dramatic in all his proceedings. To slink back unperceived to his old haunts, and recommence quietly his old habits, would neither suit his tastes, nor, as he thought, his interests. It was necessary that his return should be a sensation. Too vain and too quarrelsome to pay court to any one, he had through life made

friends by making enemies. His plan now was to raise a howl against the returning exile as an atheist and a demagogue amongst one portion of society, not doubting that in such case he would be taken up as the champion of civil and religious liberty by another.

III.

The device he adopted for this object was disinterring, or saying he had disinterred, the bones of Thomas Paine, whom he had formerly assailed as "the greatest disgrace of mankind," and now declared to be "the great enlightener of the human race," and carrying these bones over to England as the relics of a patron saint, under whose auspices he was to carry on his future political career.

Now, Paine had been considered the enemy of kingly government and the Christian religion in his time, and had greatly occupied the attention of Cobbett, who had styled him "an infamous and atrocious miscreant," but he had never been a man of great weight or note in our country; many of the existing generation scarcely knew his name, and those who did felt but a very vague retrospective interest in his career. In vain Cobbett celebrated him as "an unflinching advocate for the curtailment of aristocratical power," and "the boldest champion of popular rights." In vain he gave it clearly to be understood that Paine did not believe a word of the Old Testament or the New; nobody, in spite of Cobbett's damning encomiums, would care about Paine, or consider a box of old bones as anything but a bad joke. So that after vainly offering locks of hair or any particle of the defunct and exhumed atheist and Republican at a low price, considering the value of the relics, he let the matter drop; and, rubbing his hands and chuckling with that peculiar sardonic smile which I well remember, began to treat the affair as the world did, and the inestimable fragments of the disinterred Quaker suddenly disappeared, and were never heard of more.

But though his stage trick had failed to give him importance, his sterling unmistakable talent and unflagging

energy were sufficient to secure him from insignificance. Cobbett in England, carrying on his *Register*, charlatan as he might be, unreliable as he had become, was still a personage and a power. He supplied a sort of writing which every one read, and which no one else wrote or could write. People had no confidence in him as a politician, but, in spite of themselves, they were under his charm as an author. He was not, however, satisfied with this; he now pretended to play a higher part than he had hitherto attempted. In his own estimate of his abilities—and perhaps he did not over-rate them—his talent as an orator might, under cultivation and practice, become equal to that which he never failed to display as a pamphleteer.

A seat in the House of Commons had become then the great object of his ambition, and with his usual coolness, which might, perhaps, not unadvisedly be termed impudence, he told his admirers that the first thing they had to do, if they wanted reform, was to subscribe 5000*l.*, and place the sum in his hands, to be spent as he might think proper, and without giving an account of it to any person. "One meeting," he says, arguing this question —"one meeting subscribing 5000*l.* will be worth fifty meetings of 50,000 men."

On the dissolution of Parliament, at the demise of George III., he pursues the subject. "To you"—he is speaking to his partisans—"I do and must look for support in my public efforts. As far as the press can go, I want no assistance. Aided by my sons, I have already made the ferocious cowards of the London press sneak into silence. But there is a larger range—a more advantageous ground to stand on, and that is the House of Commons. A great effect on the public mind I have already produced, but that is nothing to the effect I should produce in only the next session of June in the House of Commons; yet there I cannot be without your assistance."

Coventry was the place fixed on as that which should have the honour of returning Cobbett to the House of Commons. Nor was the place badly chosen. In no town

in England is the class of operatives more powerful, and by this class it was not unnatural to expect that he might be elected. The leading men, however, amongst the operatives, whilst admiring Cobbett, did not respect him. The Goodes and the Pooles—men whom I remember in my time—said in his day, "He is a man who will assuredly make good speeches, but nobody can tell what he will speak in favour of, or what he will speak about. That he will say and prove that Cobbett is a very clever fellow, we may be pretty sure; but with respect to every other subject there is no knowing what he will say or prove."

Nor did the story of Paine and his bones do Cobbett any service with the Coventry electors. Some considered his conduct in this affair impious, others ludicrous. "I say, Cobbett, where are the old Quaker's bones?" was a question which his most enthusiastic admirers heard put with an uncomfortable sensation.

He puffed himself in vain. His attempt to enter the great national council was this time a dead failure, and clearly indicated that though he might boast of enthusiastic partisans, he had not as yet obtained the esteem of an intelligent public. This, however, did not prevent his announcing not very long afterwards that bronze medals, which judges thought did justice to his physiognomy, might be had for a pound apiece—a price which he thought low, considering the article. The medals, however, in spite of their artistic value, and the intrinsic merit of the person they represented, were not considered a bargain; and some of Mr. Cobbett's most devoted friends observed that they had had already enough of his bronze. This was preparatory to his starting to contest Preston (1826). But he was no better treated there than at Coventry, being the last on the poll, though as usual perfectly satisfied with himself, notwithstanding a rather remarkable pamphlet got up by a rival candidate, Mr. Wood, which placed side by side his many inconsistencies.

Mr. Huish, in a work called "Memoirs of Cobbett," published in 1836, states that this singular man now appeared

in a new character that required no constituents; coming forth "as a vendor of meat, and weekly assuring his readers that there never was such mutton, such beef, or such veal, as that which might be seen in his windows, an assurance which continued uninterruptedly," says this author, "until one inauspicious day, when it was replaced by the announcement of William Cobbett, butcher, at Kensington, having become a bankrupt."* But this story, though told thus circumstantially (I have not, for the sake of brevity, copied the exact words, but in all respects their meaning), though generally repeated, and apparently confirmed by other contemporaneous writers, is incorrect; and we are not to count amongst Cobbett's eccentricities that of cutting up carcases as well as reputations.

IV.

But whatever the other pursuits Cobbett had indulged in since his return to England, none had interfered with those which his literary talents suggested to him.

"A Work on Cottage Economy," a Volume of Sermons, "The Woodlands," "Paper against Gold," "The Rural Rides," "The Protestant Reformation," were all published between the years 1820 and 1826. His "Rural Rides," indeed, are amongst his best compositions. No one ever described the country as he did. Everything he says about it is real. You see the dew on the grass, the fragrance comes fresh to you from the flowers; you fancy yourself jogging down the green lane, with the gipsy camp under the hedge, as the sun is rising; you learn the pursuits and pleasures of the country from a man who has been all his life practically engaged in the one, and keenly enjoying the other, and who sees everything he talks to you of with the eye of the poet and the farmer.

"The History of the Protestant Reformation" turned out a more important production than the author probably anticipated—for his chief aim seems to have been to volunteer a contemptuous defiance to all the religious and

* Page 393.

popular feelings in England. The work, however, was taken up by the Catholics, translated into various languages, and widely circulated throughout Europe. The author's great satisfaction seems to consist in calling Queen Elizabeth, "Bloody Queen Bess," and Mary, "Good Queen Mary," and he, doubtless, brought forward much that could be said against the one, and in favour of the other, which Protestant writers had kept back; still his two volumes are not to be regarded as a serious history, but rather as a party pamphlet, and no more racy and eloquent party pamphlet was ever written. I quote a passage of which those who do not accept the argument may admire the composition:

"Nor must we by any means overlook the effects of these institutions (monastic) on the mere face of the country. That man must be low and mean of soul who is insensible to all feeling of pride in the noble edifices of his country. Love of country, that variety of feelings which altogether constitute what we properly call patriotism, consist in part of the admiration of, and veneration for, ancient and magnificent proofs of skill and opulence. The monastics built as well as wrote for posterity. The never-dying nature of their institutions set aside in all their undertakings every calculation as to time and age. Whether they built or planted, they set the generous example of providing for the pleasure, the honour, the wealth, and greatness of generations upon generations yet unborn. They executed everything in the very best manner; their gardens, fishponds, farms, were as near perfection as they could make them; in the whole of their economy they set an example tending to make the country beautiful, to make it an object of pride with the people, and to make the nation truly and permanently great.

"Go into any county and survey, even at this day, the ruins of its, perhaps, twenty abbeys and priories, and then ask yourself, 'What have we in exchange for these?' Go to the site of some once opulent convent. Look at the cloister, now become in the hands of some rack-renter the receptacle for dung, fodder, and fagot-wood. See the

hall, where for ages the widow, the orphan, the aged, and the stranger found a table ready spread. See a bit of its walls now helping to make a cattle-shed, the rest having been hauled away to build a workhouse. Recognise on the side of a barn, a part of the once magnificent chapel; and, if chained to the spot by your melancholy musings, you be admonished of the approach of night by the voice of the screech-owl issuing from those arches which once at the same hour resounded with the vespers of the monk, and which have for seven hundred years been assailed by storms and tempests in vain; if thus admonished of the necessity of seeking food, shelter, and a bed, lift up your eyes and look at the whitewashed and dry-rotten shed on the hill called the 'Gentleman's House,' and apprised of the 'board wages' and 'spring guns,' which are the signs of his hospitality, turn your head, jog away from the scene of former comfort and grandeur; and with old-English welcoming in your mind, reach the nearest inn, and there, in a room, half-warmed and half-lighted, with a reception precisely proportioned to the presumed length of your purse, sit down and listen to an account of the hypocritical pretences, the base motives, the tyrannical and bloody means, under which, from which, and by which, the ruin you have been witnessing was effected, and the hospitality you have lost was for ever banished from the land."

V.

The popularity of Mr. Canning had now become a grievous thorn in Cobbett's side. That of Mr. Robinson (afterwards Lord Goderich) had at one time sorely galled him. But Mr. Robinson's reputation was on the wane; the reputation of Mr. Canning, on the contrary, rose higher every day; and when that statesman, after being deserted by his colleagues, stood forward as premier of a new government, being taken up by Sir Francis Burdett, and many of the Whig leaders, Mr. Cobbett set no bounds to his choler; and, in company with Mr. Hunt, made at a Westminster dinner (in 1827) a foolish and ill-timed display of his usual hostility to the popular feeling.

His character, in sooth, was never so low as about this period, and in 1828, when he offered himself as a candidate for the place of common councilman (for Farringdon Without), he did not even find one person who would propose him for the office.

It is needless to add that he was now an utterly soured and disappointed man, and in this state the year 1830 found him. The close of that year was more full of melancholy presage for England than perhaps any which the oldest man then alive could remember. The success of the insurrection at Paris had shaken the political foundations of every state in Europe. Scarcely a courier arrived without the bulletin of a revolution. The minds of the intelligent classes were excited; they expected, and perhaps wished for, some great movement at home, analogous to those movements which a general enthusiasm was producing on the Continent. The minds of the lower classes were brutalized by the effects of a Poor Law which had taught them that idleness was more profitable than labour, prostitution than chastity, bad conduct, in short, than good. Consequently, there was on the one hand a widely-spread cry for parliamentary reform, and on the other a general rural insurrection. Amidst this state of things the ministry of the Duke of Wellington retired, and Lord Grey's, composed of somewhat discordant materials, and with a doubtful parliamentary majority, took its place. Fires blazed throughout the country; rumours of plots and insurrections were rife, and the *Register* appeared with an article remarkable for its power, and which indirectly excited to incendiarism and rebellion. The Attorney-General prosecuted it. I had then just entered Parliament, and ventured to condemn the prosecution, not because the article in question was blameless, but because I thought that the period for newspaper prosecutions by government was gone by, and that they only excited sympathy for the offender. I was not wrong in that opinion; for the jury being unable to agree as to a verdict, Cobbett walked triumphantly out of court, and having gained some credit by his trial, was shortly afterwards returned to Parliament for Oldham, being

at the same time an unsuccessful candidate for Manchester.

The election, however, was less the effect of public esteem than of private admiration, since the veteran journalist owed his success mainly to the influence of a gentleman (Mr. Fielden) who had the borough of Oldham pretty nearly under his control. Still, it was a success, and not an inconsiderable one. The ploughboy, the private of the 54th, after a variety of vicissitudes, had become a member of the British Legislature. Nor for this had he bowed his knee to any minister, nor served any party, nor administered with ambitious interest to any popular feeling. His pen had been made to serve as a double-edged sword, which smote alike Whig and Tory, Pitt and Fox, Castlereagh and Tierney, Canning and Brougham, Wellington and Grey, even Hunt and Waithman. He had sneered at education, at philosophy, and at negro emancipation. He had assailed alike Catholicism and Protestantism; he had respected few feelings that Englishmen respect. Nevertheless, by force of character, by abilities to which he had allowed the full swing of their inclination, he had at last cut his way, unpatronized and poor, through conflicting opinions into the great council chamber of the British nation. He was there, as he had been through life, an isolated man. He owned no followers, and he was owned by none. His years surpassed those of any member who ever came into Parliament for the first time expecting to take an active part in it. He was stout and hale for his time of life, but far over sixty, and fast advancing towards three score years and ten.

It was an interesting thing to most men who saw him enter the House to have palpably before them the real, living William Cobbett. The generation amongst which he yet moved had grown up in awe of his name, but few had ever seen the man who bore it.

The world had gone for years to the clubs, on Saturday evening, to find itself lectured by him, abused by him; it had the greatest admiration for his vigorous eloquence, the greatest dread of his scar-inflicting lash; it had been living

with him, intimate with him, as it were, but it had not seen him.

I speak of the world's majority; for a few persons had met him at county and public meetings, at elections, and also in courts of justice. But to most members of Parliament the elderly, respectable-looking, red-faced gentleman, in a dust-coloured coat and drab breeches with gaiters, was a strange and almost historical curiosity. Tall and strongly built, but stooping, with sharp eyes, a round and ruddy countenance, smallish features, and a peculiarly cynical mouth, he realized pretty nearly the idea that might have been formed about him. The manner of his speaking might also have been anticipated. His style in writing was sarcastic and easy—such it was not unnatural to suppose it might also be in addressing an assembly; and this to a certain extent was the case. He was still colloquial, bitter, with a dry, caustic, and rather drawling delivery, and a rare manner of arguing with facts. To say that he spoke as well as he wrote, would be to place him where he was not—among the most effective orators of his time. He had not, as a speaker, the raciness of diction, nor the happiness of illustration, by which he excels as a writer. He wanted also some physical qualifications unnecessary to the author, but necessary to the orator, and which he might as a younger man have naturally possessed or easily acquired. In short, he could not be at that time the powerful personage that he might have been had he taken his seat on the benches where he was then sitting, when many surrounding him were unknown—even unborn. Still, I know no other instance of a man entering the House of Commons at his age, and becoming at once an effective debater in it. Looking carelessly round the assembly so new to him, with his usual self-confidence he spoke on the first occasion that presented itself, proposing an amendment to the Address; but this was not his happiest effort, and consequently created disappointment. He soon, however, obliterated the failure, and became rather a favourite with an audience which is only unforgiving when bored.

It was still seen, moreover, that nothing daunted him;

the murmurs, the "Oh!" or more serious reprehension and censure, found him shaking his head with his hands in his pockets, as cool and as defiant as when he first stuck up the picture of King George in his shop window at Philadelphia. He exhibited in Parliament, too, the same want of tact, prudence, and truth; the same egotism, the same combativeness, and the same reckless desire to struggle with received opinions, that had marked him previously through life, and shattered his career into glittering fragments, from which the world could never collect the image, nor the practical utility of a whole.

A foolish and out-of-the-way motion, praying his Majesty to strike Sir Robert Peel's name off the list of the Privy Council, for having proposed a return to cash payments in 1819, was his wildest effort and most signal defeat, the House receiving Sir Robert, when he stood up in his defence, with a loud burst of cheers, and voting in a majority of 298 to 4 in his favour.

Cobbett, however, was nothing abashed; for this motion was rather a piece of fun, in his own way, than anything serious; and in reality he was less angry with Sir Robert Peel, on account of his financial measures in 1819, than on account of his being the most able speaker in Parliament in 1833.

VI.

In the new Parliament elected in January 1835, and which met on the 19th February, Cobbett was again member for Oldham. But his health was already much broken by the change of habits, the want of air, and the confinement which weighs on a parliamentary life. He did not, however, perceive this; it was not, indeed, his habit to perceive anything to his own disadvantage. He continued his attendance, therefore, and was in his usual place during the whole of the debate on the Marquis of Chandos's motion for a repeal of the Malt Tax, and would have spoken in favour of the repeal but for a sudden attack of the throat, to which it is said that he was subject. On the voting of Supplies, which followed almost immediately afterwards, he again, notwithstanding his indisposition, exerted himself, and on the 25th of May persisted in voting

and speaking in support of a motion on Agricultural Distress. At last, he confessed he was knocked up, and retired to the country, where for some little time he seemed restored. But on the night of the 11th of June, 1835, he was seized with a violent illness, and on the two following days was considered in extreme danger by his medical attendant. He then again rallied, and on Monday, the 15th, talked (says his son in an account of his death, published on the 20th of June), in a collected and sprightly manner, upon politics and farming, "wishing for four days' rain for the Cobbetts' corn and root crops," and on Wednesday could remain no longer shut up from the fields, but desired to be carried round the farm, and criticised the work which had been done in his absence. In the night, however, he grew more and more feeble, until it was evident (though he continued till within the last half-hour to answer every question that was put to him) that his agitated career was drawing to a close. At ten minutes after one P.M. he shut his eyes as if to sleep, leant back, and was no more—an end singularly peaceful for one whose life had been so full of toil and turmoil.

The immediate cause of his death was water on the chest. He was buried, according to his own desire, in a simple manner in the churchyard of Farnham, in the same mould as that in which his father and grandfather had been laid before him. His death struck people with surprise, for few could remember the commencement of his course, and there had seemed in it no middle and no decline; for though he went down to the grave an old man, he was young in the path he had lately started upon. He left a gap in the public mind which no one else could fill or attempt to fill up, for his loss was not merely that of a man, but of a habit—of a dose of strong drink which all of us had been taking for years, most of us during our whole lives, and which it was impossible for any one again to concoct so strongly, so strangely, with so much spice and flavour, or with such a variety of ingredients. And there was this peculiarity in the general regret—it extended to all persons. Whatever a man's talents, whatever a man's opinions, he sought the *Register*

on the day of its appearance with eagerness, and read it with amusement, partly, perhaps, if De la Rochefoucault is right, because, whatever his party, he was sure to see his friends abused. But partly also because he was certain to find, amidst a great many fictions and abundance of impudence, some felicitous nickname, some excellent piece of practical-looking argument, some capital expressions, and very often some marvellously-fine writing,* all the finer for being carelessly fine, and exhibiting whatever figure or sentiment it set forth, in the simplest as well as the most striking dress. Cobbett himself, indeed, said that "*his popularity was owing to his giving truth in clear language;*" and his language always did leave his meaning as visible as the most limpid stream leaves its bed. But as to its displaying truth, that is a different matter, and would be utterly impossible, unless truth has, at least, as many heads as the Hydra of fable; in which case our author may claim the merit of having portrayed them all.

This, however, is to be remarked—he rarely abused that which was falling or fallen, but generally that which was rising or uppermost. He disinterred Paine when his memory was interred, and attacked him as an impostor amongst those who hailed him as a prophet. In the heat of the contest and cry against the Catholics—whom, when Mr. Pitt was for emancipating them, he was for grinding into the dust—he calls the Reformation a devastation, and pronounces the Protestant religion to have been established by gibbets, racks, and ripping-knives. When all London was yet rejoicing in Wellington hats and Wellington boots, he asserts "that the celebrated victory of Waterloo had caused to England more real shame, more real and substantial disgrace, more debt, more distress amongst the middle class, and more misery amongst the working class, more injuries of all kinds, than the kingdom could have

* People are often at this day disputing as to whether a particular picture is by the master it is attributed to, or by one of his scholars. A peculiarity of genius in an artist is to create first-rate imitators in those who live in his society; and it is not unworthy of notice that one of the best pieces of writing in Cobbett's best style is "The Rat Hunt" (*Political Register*, vol. xci. p. 380), and was by the pen of Mr. J. M. Cobbett, Mr. Cobbett's son.

ever experienced by a hundred defeats, whether by sea or by land." He had a sort of itch for bespattering with mud everything that was popular, and gilding everything that was odious. Mary Tudor was with him "Merciful Queen Mary;" Elizabeth, as I have already observed, "Bloody Queen Bess;" our Navy, "the swaggering Navy;" Napoleon, "a French coxcomb;" Brougham, "a talking lawyer;" Canning, "a brazen defender of corruptions."

His praise or censure afforded a sort of test to be taken in an inverse sense of the world's opinion. He could not bear superiority of any kind, or reconcile himself to its presence. He declined, it is said, to insert quack puffs in his journal, merely, I believe, because he could not bear to spread anybody's notoriety but his own; while he told his correspondents never to write under the name of subscriber—it sounded too much like *master*. As for absurdity, nothing was too absurd for him coolly and deliberately to assert: "The English government most anxiously wished for Napoleon's return to France." "There would have been no national debt and no paupers, if there had been no Reformation." "The population of England had not increased one single soul since he was born." Such are a few of the many paradoxes one could cite from his writings, and which are now before me.

Neither did his coarseness know any bounds. He called a newspaper a "cut-and-thrust weapon," to be used without mercy or delicacy, and never thought of anything but how he could strike the hardest. "There's a fine Congress-man for you! If any d——d rascally rotten borough in the universe ever made such a choice as this (a Mr. Blair MacClenachan), you'll be bound to cut my throat, and suffer the *sans culottes* sovereigns of Philadelphia—the hob-snob snigger-snee-ers of Germanstown—to kick me about in my blood till my corpse is as ugly and disgusting as their living carcases are." "Bark away, hell-hounds, till you are suffocated in your own foam." "This hatter turned painter (Samuel F. Bradford), whose heart is as black and as foul as the liquid in which he dabbles."

"It is fair, also, to observe that this State (Pennsylvania)

labours under disadvantages in one respect that no other State does. Here is precisely that climate which suits the vagabonds of Europe; here they bask in summer, and lie curled up in winter, without fear of scorching in one season, or freezing in the other. Accordingly, hither they come in shoals, just roll themselves ashore, and begin to swear and poll away as if they had been bred to the business from their infancy. She has too unhappily acquired a reputation for the mildness or rather the feebleness of her laws. There's no gallows in Pennsylvania. These glad tidings have rung through all the democratic club-rooms, all the dark assemblies of traitors, all the dungeons and cells of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Hence it is that we are overwhelmed with the refuse, the sweeping, of these kingdoms, the offal of the jail and the gibbet. Hence it is that we see so many faces that never looked comely but in the pillory, limbs that are awkward out of chains, and necks that seem made to be stretched."

It would be difficult to put together more pithy sentences, or more picturesque abuse than is set forth in the scurrilous extracts I have been citing; yet Cobbett's virulence could be conveyed in a more delicate way whenever he thought proper:

"Since then, Citizen Barney is become a French commodore of two frigates, and will rise probably to the rank of admiral, if contrary winds do not blow him in the way of an enemy."

His mode of commencing an attack also was often singularly effective from its humour and personality: "He was a sly-looking fellow, with a hard, slate-coloured countenance. He set out by blushing, and I may leave any one to guess at the efforts that must be made to get a blush through a skin like his." Again: "Having thus settled the point of controversy, give me leave to ask you, my sweet sleepy-eyed sir!"

The following picture is equal to anything ever sketched by Hogarth, and is called "A Summary of Proceedings of Congress," November, 1794:

"Never was a more ludicrous farce acted to a bursting audience. Madison is a little bow-legged man, at once

stiff and slender. His countenance has that sour aspect, that conceited screw, which pride would willingly mould into an expression of disdain, if it did not find the features too skinny and too scanty for its purpose. His thin, sleek air, and the niceness of his garments, are indicative of that economical cleanliness which expostulates with the shoeboy and the washerwoman, which flies from the danger of a gutter, and which boasts of wearing a shirt for three days without rumpling the frill. In short, he has, take him altogether, precisely the prim, mean, prig-like look of a corporal mechanic, and were he ushered into your parlour, you would wonder why he came without his measure and his shears. Such (and with a soul which would disgrace any other tenement than that which contains it) is the mortal who stood upon his legs, confidently predicting the overthrow of the British monarchy, and anticipating the pleasure of feeding its illustrious nobles with his oats."

Again, let us fancy the following sentences, imitating what the gentlemen of the United States call "stump speaking," delivered with suitable tone and gesture on the hustings: "The commercial connection between this country (America) and Great Britain is as necessary as that between the baker and the miller; while the connection between America and France may be compared to that between the baker and the milliner or toyman. France may furnish us with looking-glasses, but without the aid of Britain we shall be ashamed to see ourselves in them; unless the *sans culottes* can persuade us that threadbare beggary is—a beauty. France may deck the heads of our wives and daughters (by the bye, she shan't those of mine) with ribbons, gauze, and powder; their ears with bobs, their cheeks with paint, and their heels with gaudy parti-coloured silk, as rotten as the hearts of the manufacturers; but Great Britain must keep warm their limbs and cover their bodies. When the rain pours down, and washes the rose from the cheek, when the bleak north-wester blows through the gauze, then it is that we know our friends."

Cobbett's talent for fastening his claws into anything or any one, by a word or an expression, and holding them

down for scorn or up to horror—a talent which, throughout this sketch, I have frequently noticed—was unrivalled. "Prosperity Robinson," "Œolus Canning," "The Bloody *Times*," "the pink-nosed *Liverpool*," "the unbaptized, buttonless blackguards" (in which way he designated the disciples of Penn),* were expressions with which he attached ridicule where he could not fix reproach, and it is said that nothing was more teasing to Lord Erskine than being constantly addressed by his second title of "Baron Clackmannan."

VII.

I have alluded, at the commencement of this sketch, to the fact that if the life of Mackintosh was in contradiction to his instincts, and forced to adapt itself to his wishes or ideas, that of Cobbett was ruled by his instincts, to which all ideas and wishes were subordinate. His inclinations were for bustle and strife, and he passed his whole life in strife and bustle. This is why the sap and marrow of his genius show themselves in every line he sent to the press. But at the same time his career warns us how little talents of the highest order, even when accompanied by the most unflagging industry, will do for a man, if those talents and that industry are not disciplined by stedfast principles and concentrated upon noble objects. It is not to be understood, indeed, when I say that a man should follow his nature, that I mean he should do so without sense or judgment; your natural character is your force, but it is a

* Of this sect, by the way, he elsewhere speaks in these eulogistic terms:

"Here am I amongst the thick of the Quakers, whose houses and families pleased me so much formerly, and which pleasure is now revived. Here all is ease, plenty, and cheerfulness. These people are never *giggling*, and never in *low spirits*. Their minds, like their dress, are simple and strong. Their kindness is shown more in acts than in words. Let others say what they will, I have uniformly found those whom I have intimately known of this sect sincere and upright men; and I verily believe that all those charges of hypocrisy and craft that we hear against Quakers, arise from a feeling of *envy;* envy inspired by seeing them possessed of such abundance of all those things which are the fair fruits of care, industry, economy, sobriety, and order; and which are justly forbidden to the drunkard, the prodigal, and the lazy."

force that you must regulate and keep applied to the track on which the career it has chosen is to be honourably run. I would not recommend a man with military propensities to enter the church; I should say, "Be a soldier, but do not be a military adventurer. Enlist under a lawful banner, and fight for a good cause."

Cobbett acknowledged no banner; and one cannot say, considering the variety of doctrines he by turns adopted and discarded, that he espoused any cause. Nor did he consider himself bound by any tie of private or political friendship. As a beauty feels no gratitude for the homage which she deems due to her charms, so Cobbett felt no gratitude for the homage paid to his abilities. His idea of himself was that which the barbarian entertains of his country. Cobbett was Cobbett's universe; and as he treated mankind, so mankind at last treated him. They admired him as a myth, but they had no affection for him as a person. His words were realities, his principles fictions.

It may indeed be contended that a predominant idea ran winding through all the twistings and twinings of his career, connecting his different inconsistencies together; and that this was "a hatred for tyranny." "He always took his stand," say his defenders, "with the minority:" and there is something in this assertion. But there is far less fun and excitement in fighting a minority, with a large majority at one's back, than in coming out, at the head of a small and violent minority, to defy and attack a body of greater power and of larger numbers. It was this fun and excitement which, if I mistake not, were Cobbett's main inducements to take the side he took in all the contests he engaged in, whether against the minister of the day, or against our favourite daughter of the eighth Henry, who reigned some centuries before his time. Still the tendency to combat against odds is always superior to the tendency to cringe to them, and a weak cause is not unfrequently made victorious by a bold assertion.

It must be added also, in his praise, that he is always a hearty Englishman. He may vary in his opinions as to doctrines and as to men, but he is ever for making

England great, powerful, and prosperous—her people healthy, brave, and free. He never falls into the error of mistaking political economy for the whole of political science. He does not say, "Be wealthy, make money, and care about nothing else." He advocates rural pursuits as invigorating to a population, although less profitable than manufacturing. He desires to see Englishmen fit for war as well as for peace. There is none of that puling primness about him which marks the philosophers who would have a great nation, like a good boy at a private school, fit for nothing but obedience and books. To use a slang phrase, there was "a go" about him which, despite all his charlatanism, all his eccentricities, kept up the national spirit, and exhibited in this one of the highest merits of political writing. The immense number of all his publications that sold immediately on their appearance, sufficiently proves the wonderful popularity of his style; and it is but just to admit that many of his writings were as useful as popular.

A paper written in 1804, on the apprehended invasion, and entitled "Important Considerations for the People of this Kingdom," was placed (the author being unknown) in manuscript before Mr. Addington, who caused it to be printed and read from the pulpit in every parish throughout the kingdom. For many years this paper was attributed to other eminent men; and it was only when some one thought of attacking Cobbett as an enemy of his country, that he confessed the authorship of a pamphlet, to the patriotism of which every Englishman had paid homage.

Again, in 1816, the people of the northern and midland counties being in great distress, attributed their calamities to machinery, and great rioting and destruction of property was the consequence. Cobbett came forward to stop these vulgar delusions. But he knew the nature of the public mind. It was necessary, in order to divert it from one idea, to give it another. So, he ridiculed the idea of distress proceeding from machinery, and attributed it to misgovernment. Of his twopenny pamphlet, called "A Letter to Journeymen and Labourers," 30,000 copies were

sold in a week, and with such advantage that Lord Brougham, in 1831, asked permission to republish it. Much in his exaggerations and contradictions is likewise to be set down to drollery rather than to any serious design to deceive. I remember the late Lady Holland once asking me if I did not think she sometimes said ill-natured things; and on my acquiescing, she rejoined: "I don't mean to burn any one, but merely to poke the fire." Cobbett liked to poke the fire, to make a blaze; but in general—I will not say always—he thought more of sport than of mischief.

At all events, this very spirit of change, of criticism, of combativeness, is the spirit of journalism; and Cobbett was not only this spirit embodied, but—and this renders his life so remarkable in our history—he represented journalism, and fought the fight of journalism against authority, when it was still a doubt which would gain the day.

Let us not, indeed, forget the blind and uncalculating intolerance with which the law struggled against opinion from 1809 to 1822. Writers during this period were transported, imprisoned, and fined, without limit or conscience; and just when government became more gentle to legitimate newspapers, it engaged in a new conflict with unstamped ones. No less than 500 vendors of these were imprisoned within six years. The contest was one of life and death. Amidst the general din of the battle, but high above all shouts more confused, was heard Cobbett's bold, bitter, scornful voice, cheering on the small but determined band, which defied tyranny without employing force. The failure of the last prosecution against the *Register* was the general failure of prosecutions against the Press, and may be said to have closed the contest in which government lost power every time that it made victims.

Such was Cobbett—such his career! I have only to add that, in his family relations, this contentious man was kind and gentle. An incomparable husband, an excellent father; and his sons—profiting by an excellent education, and inheriting, not, perhaps, the marvellous energies, but

a great portion of the ability, of their father—carry on with credit and respectability the name of a man, who, whatever his faults, must be considered by every Englishman who loves our literature, or studies our history, as one of the most remarkable illustrations of his very remarkable time.

CANNING,

THE BRILLIANT MAN.

Part I.

FROM BIRTH AND EDUCATION TO DUEL WITH LORD CASTLEREAGH.

Proper time for writing a biography.—Mr. Canning born (1770).—Education at Eton and Oxford.—Early literary performances.—Brought into Parliament by Mr. Pitt.—Politics he espoused.—His commencement as a speaker.—Writes for the *Anti-Jacobin*.—Quits office with Mr. Pitt.—Opposes Mr. Addington.—Returns to office with Mr. Pitt.—Distinguishes himself in opposition to "All the Talents."—Becomes Minister of Foreign Affairs on their fall.—Foreign policy.—Quarrel with Lord Castlereagh, and duel.

I.

There is no period at which an eminent person is so little considered, so much forgotten and disregarded, as during the few years succeeding his decease. His name, no longer noised above that of others by the busy zeal of his partisans, or the still more clamorous energies of his opponents, drops away suddenly, as it were, from the mouths of men. To his contemporaries he has ceased to be of importance—the most paltry pretender to his place is of more;—while posterity does not exist for him, until the dead are distinctly separated from the living; until the times in which he lived, and the scenes in which he acted, have become as a distant prospect from which the eye can at once single out from amidst the mass of ordinary objects, those which were the memorials of their epoch, and are to become the beacons of after-generations.

The French, who are as fond of putting philosophy into action as we are coy of connecting theory with practice, marked out, at one moment, a kind of intermediate space between the past and the present, the tomb and the pantheon; but the interval of ten years, which they assigned for separating the one from the other, is hardly sufficient for the purpose.

We are, however, now arrived at the period that permits our considering the subject of this memoir as a character in history which it is well to describe without further procrastination. Every day, indeed, leaves us fewer of those who remember the clearly-chiselled countenance which the slouched hat only slightly concealed,—the lip satirically curled,—the penetrating eye, peering along the Opposition benches,—of the old parliamentary leader in the House of Commons. It is but here and there that we find a survivor of the old day, to speak to us of the singularly mellifluous and sonorous voice, the classical language—now pointed into epigram, now elevated into poesy, now burning with passion, now rich with humour —which curbed into still attention a willing and long-broken audience.

The great changes of the last half-century have, moreover, created such a new order of ideas and of society, that the years preceding 1830 appear as belonging to an antecedent century; and the fear now is—not that we are too near, but that we are gliding away too far from the events of that biography which I propose to sketch. And yet he who undertakes the task of biographical delineation, should not be wholly without the scope of the influences which coloured the career he desires to sketch. The artist can hardly give the likeness of the face he never saw, nor the writer speak vividly of events which are merely known to him by tradition.

II.

It is with this feeling that I attempt to say something of a man, the most eminent of a period at which the government of England was passing, imperceptibly perhaps, but not slowly, from the hands of an exclusive

but enlightened aristocracy, into those of a middle class, of which the mind, the energy, and the ambition had been gradually developed, under the mixed influences of a war which had called forth the resources, and of a peace which had tried the prosperity, of our country;—a middle class which was growing up with an improved and extended education, amidst stirring debates as to the height to which the voice of public opinion should be allowed to raise itself, and the latitude that should be given, in a singularly mixed constitution, to its more democratic parts.

Mr. Canning was born on the 11th of April, 1770, and belonged to an old and respectable family originally resident in Warwickshire.* A branch of it, obtaining a grant of the manor of Garvagh, settled in Ireland in the reign of James I., and from this branch Mr. Canning descended; but the misfortunes of his parents placed him in a situation below that which might have been expected from his birth.

His father, the eldest of three sons—George, Paul, and Stratford—was disinherited for marrying a young lady (Miss Costello) without fortune; and having some taste for literature, but doing nothing at the bar, he died amidst the difficulties incidental to idle habits and elegant tastes.

Mrs. Canning, left without resources, attempted the stage, but she had no great talents for the theatrical profession, and never rose above the rank of a middling actress. Her son thus fell under the care of his uncle, Mr. Stratford Canning, a highly respectable merchant, and an old Whig, much in the confidence of the leaders of the Whig party and possessing considerable influence with them. A small inheritance of 200*l.* or 300*l.* a year sufficed for the expenses of a liberal education, and after passing through the regular ordeal of a private school, young Canning was sent to Eton, and subsequently to Christ Church, Oxford. At Eton no boy ever left behind him so many brilliant recollections. Gay and high-

* His son, the late Earl Canning, represented Warwick in the House of Commons from August, 1836, to March, 1837.

spirited as a companion, clever and laborious as a student, he obtained a following from his character, and a reputation from his various successes. This reputation was the greater from the schoolboy's triumphs not being merely those of school. Known and distinguished as "George Canning," he was yet more known and distinguished as the correspondent of "Gregory Griffin;"—such being the name adopted by the fictitious editor of the *Microcosm*, a publication in the style of the *Spectator*, and carried on solely by Eton lads. In this publication, the graver prose of the young orator was incorrect and inferior to that of one or two other juvenile contributors, but some of his lighter productions were singularly graceful, and it would be difficult to find anything of its kind superior to a satirical commentary upon the epic merits of an old ballad:

> "The queen of hearts
> She made some tarts
> *All on a summer's day*," &c.*

"I cannot leave this line," says the witty commentator, "without remarking, that one of the Scribleri, a descendant of the famous Martinus, has expressed his suspicions of the text being corrupted here, and proposes, instead of 'All on,' reading 'Alone,' alleging, in the favour of this alteration, the effect of solitude in raising the passions. But Hiccius Doctius, a High Dutch commentator, one nevertheless well versed in British literature, in a note of his usual length and learning, has confuted the arguments of Scriblerus. In support of the present reading, he quotes a passage from a poem written about the same period with our author's, by the celebrated Johannes Pastor (most commonly known as Jack Shepherd), entitled, 'An Elegiac Epistle to the Turnkey of Newgate,' wherein the gentleman declares, that, rather indeed in compliance with an old custom than to gratify any particular wish of his own, he is going

> "'*All hanged* for to be
> Upon that fatal Tyburn tree.'

* See *Microcosm*.

"Now, as nothing throws greater light on an author than the concurrence of a contemporary writer, I am inclined to be of Hiccius' opinion, and to consider the 'All' as an elegant expletive, or, as he more aptly phrases it, 'elegans expletivum.'"

The other articles to which the boyish talent of the lad, destined to be so famous, may lay claim, are designated in the will of the supposed editor, Mr. Griffin (contained in the concluding number of the *Microcosm*), which, amongst special bequests assigns to "Mr. George Canning, now of the college of Eton, all my papers, essays, &c., signed B."

III.

It is needless to observe that an Eton education is more for the man of the world than for the man of books. It teaches little in the way of science or solid learning, but it excites emulation, encourages and gratifies a love of fame, and prepares the youth for the competitions of manhood. Whatever is dashing and showy gives pre-eminence in that spirited little world from which have issued so many English statesmen. It developed in Canning all his natural propensities. He was the show boy at Montem days with master and student.

"Look, papa,—there, there;—that good-looking fellow is Canning—such a clever chap, but a horrible Whig. By Jupiter, how he gives it to Pitt!"

Nor was this wonderful. The youthful politician spent his holidays with his uncle, who only saw Whigs; and then, what clever boy would not have been charmed by the wit and rhetoric of Sheridan—by the burning eloquence of Fox?

The same dispositions that had shown themselves at Eton, carried to Oxford, produced the same distinctions. Sedulous at his studies, almost Republican in his principles, the pride of his college, the glory of his debating society, the intimate associate of the first young men in birth, talents, and prospects, young Canning was thus early known as the brilliant and promising young man of his day, and thought likely to be one of the most distin-

guished of those intellectual gladiators whom the great parties employed in their struggles for power; struggles which seemed at the moment to disorder the administration of affairs, but which, carried on with eloquence and ability in the face of the nation, kept its attention alive to national interests, and could not fail to diffuse throughout it a lofty spirit, and a sort of political education.

IV.

From the University Canning went to Lincoln's Inn. It does not appear, however, that in taking to the study of the law he had any idea of becoming a Lord Chancellor. There was nothing of severity in his plan of life—he dined out with those who invited him, and his own little room was at times modestly lit up for gatherings together of old friends, who enjoyed new jokes, and amongst whom and for whom were composed squibs, pamphlets, newspaper articles, in steady glorification of school and college opinions, which the Oxonian, on quitting the University, had no doubt the intention to sustain in the great battles of party warfare.

But events were then beginning to make men's convictions tremble under them; and, with the increasing differences amongst veteran statesmen, it was difficult to count on youthful recruits.

At all events, it is about this time that Mr. Canning's political career begins. It must be viewed in relation to the particular state of society and government which then existed.

From the days of Queen Anne there had been a contest going on between the two aristocratic factions, "Whig" and "Tory." The principles professed by either were frequently changed. The Tories, such as Sir William Windham, under the guidance of Bolingbroke, often acting as Reformers; and the Whigs, under Walpole, often acting as Conservatives. The being in or out of place was in fact the chief difference between the opposing candidates for office, though the Whigs generally passed for being favourable to popular pretensions, and the Tories for being favourable to Royal authority.

In the meantime public opinion, except on an occasional crisis when the nation made itself heard, was the opinion of certain coteries, and public men were the men of those coteries. It not unfrequently happened that the most distinguished for ability were the most distinguished for birth and fortune. But it was by no means necessary that it should be so. The chiefs of the two conflicting armies sought to obtain everywhere the best soldiers. Each had a certain number of commissions to give away, or, in other words, of seats in Parliament to dispose of. They who had the government in their hands could count from that fact alone on thirty or forty. It matters little how these close boroughs were created. Peers or gentlemen possessed them as simple property, or as the effect of dominant local influence. The Treasury controlled them as an effect of the patronage or employments which office placed in its hands. A certain number were sold or let by their proprietors, and even by the Administration; and in this manner men who had made fortunes in our colonies or in trade, and were averse to a public canvass, and without local landed influence, found their way into the great National Council. They paid their 5000*l.* down, or their 1000*l.* a year, and could generally, though not always, find a seat on such terms. But a large portion of these convenient entries into the House of Commons was kept open for distinguished young men, who gave themselves up to public affairs as to a profession. A school or college reputation, an able pamphlet, a club, or county meeting oration, pointed them out. The minister, or great man who wished to be a minister, brought them into Parliament. If they failed, they sank into insignificance; if they succeeded, they worked during a certain time for the great men of the day, and then became great men themselves.

This system had advantages, counterbalanced by defects, and gave to England a set of trained and highly educated statesmen, generally well informed on all national questions, strongly attached to party combinations, connected by the ties of gratitude and patronage with the higher classes, having a certain contempt for the middle: keenly alive

to the glory, the power, the greatness of the country, and sympathising little with the habits and wants of the great masses of the people.

They had not a correct knowledge of the feelings and wants of the poor man,—they understood and shared the feelings of the gentleman. Bread might be dear or cheap, they cared little about it; a battle gained or lost affected them more deeply. A mob might be massacred without greatly exciting their compassion; but the loss of a great general or of a great statesman they felt as a national calamity.

Such were the men who might fairly be called "political adventurers:" a class to which we owe much of our political renown, much of our reputation for political capacity, but which, in only rare instances, won the public esteem or merited the popular affections. Such were our political adventurers when Mr. Pitt sent for Mr. Canning, a scholar of eminence and a young man of superior and shining abilities, and offered him a seat in the House of Commons.

The following is the simple manner in which this interview is spoken of by a biographer of Mr. Canning:*

"Mr. Pitt, through a private channel, communicated his desire to see Mr. Canning; Mr. Canning of course complied. Mr. Pitt immediately proceeded, on their meeting, to declare to Mr. Canning the object of his requesting an interview with him, which was to state that he had heard of Mr. Canning's reputation as a scholar and a speaker, and that if he concurred in the policy which the Government was then pursuing, arrangements would be made to bring him into Parliament."

The person to whom this offer was made accepted it; nor was this surprising.

I have already said that events were about this period taking place, that made men's convictions tremble under them; and in fact the mob rulers of Paris had in a few months so desecrated the name of Freedom, that half of its ancient worshippers covered their faces with their hands, and shuddered when it was pronounced.

* In the Life given in the edition of Mr. Canning's Speeches.

But there were also other circumstances of a more personal nature, which, now that young Canning had seriously to think of his entry into public life, had, I have been assured, an influence on his resolutions.

The first incident, I was once told by Mr. John Allen, that disinclined Mr. Canning (who had probably already some misgivings) to attach himself irrevocably to the Whig camp, was the following one: Lord Liverpool, then Mr. Jenkinson, had just made his appearance in the House of Commons. His first speech was highly successful. "There is a young friend of mine," said Mr. Sheridan, "whom I soon hope to hear answering the honourable gentleman who has just distinguished himself: a contemporary whom he knows to possess talents not inferior to his own, but whose principles, I trust, are very different from his."

This allusion, however kindly meant, was disagreeable, said Mr. Allen, to the youthful aspirant to public honours. It pledged him, as he thought, prematurely; it brought him forward under the auspices of a man, who, however distinguished as an individual, was not in a position to be a patron. Other reflections, it is added, followed. The party then in opposition possessed almost every man distinguished in public life: a host of formidable competitors in the road to honour and preferment, supposing preferment and honour to be attainable by talent. But this was not all. The Whig party, then, as always, was essentially an exclusive party; its preferments were concentrated on a clique, which regarded all without it as its subordinates and instruments.

On the other side, the Prime Minister stood almost alone. He had every office to bestow, and few candidates of any merit for official employments. Haughty from temperament, and flushed with power, which he had attained early and long exercised without control, he had not the pride of rank, nor the aristocratic attachments for which high families linked together are distinguished. His partisans and friends were his own. He had elevated them for no other reason than that they were his. By those to whom he had once shown favour he had always

stood firm; all who had followed had shared his fortunes; there can be no better promise to adherents.

These were not explanations that Mr. Canning could make precisely to the Whig leaders, but he had an affection for Mr. Sheridan, who had always been kind to him, and by whom he did not wish to be thought ungrateful. He sought, then, an interview with that good-natured and gifted person. Lord Holland, Mr. Canning's contemporary, was present at it, and told me that nothing could be more respectful and unreserved than the manner in which the ambitious young man gave his reasons for the change he was prepared to make, or had made; nothing more warm-hearted, unprejudiced, and frank, than the veteran orator's reception of his retiring *protégé's* confession: nor, indeed, could Mr. Sheridan help feeling the application, when he was himself cited as an example of the haughtiness with which "the great Whig Houses" looked down on the lofty aspirations of mere genius. The conversation thus alluded to took place a little before Mr. Pitt's proposals were made, but probably when they were expected. Mr. Canning, his views fairly stated to the only person to whom he felt bound to give them, and his seat in Parliament secured, placed himself in front of his old friends, whom Colonel Fitz-Patrick avenged by the following couplet:

> "The turning of coats so common is grown,
> That no one would think to attack it;
> But no case until now was so flagrantly known
> Of a schoolboy turning his jacket."

V.

There was little justice in Colonel Fitz-Patrick's satire. Nine-tenths of Mr. Fox's partisans, old and young, were deserting his standard when Mr. Canning quitted him. The cultivated mind of England was, as it has been said in two or three of these sketches, against the line which the Whig leader persisted to take with respect to the French Revolution—even after its excesses; and it is easy to conceive that the cause of Liberty and Fraternity should have become unfashionable when these weird sisters were

seen brandishing the knife, and dancing round the guillotine. Admitting, however, the legitimacy of the horror with which the assassins of the Committee of Public Safety inspired the greater portion of educated Englishmen, it is still a question whether England should have provoked their hostility; for, after the recall of our ambassador and our undisguised intention of making war, the Republic's declaration of it was a matter of course.

"Where could be the morality," said Mr. Pitt's opponents, "of bringing fresh calamities upon a land which so many calamities already desolated? Where the policy of concentrating and consolidating so formidable an internal system by an act of foreign aggression? And if the struggle we then engaged in was in itself inhuman and impolitic, what was to be said as to the time at which we entered upon it?

"The natural motives that might have suggested a French war, were—the wish to save an unhappy monarch from an unjust and violent death; the desire to subdue the arrogance of a set of miscreants who, before they were prepared to execute the menace, threatened to overrun the world with their principles and their arms. If these were our motives, why not draw the sword, before the Sovereign whose life we wished to protect had perished? Why defer our conflict with the French army until, flushed with victory and threatened with execution in the event of defeat, raw recruits were changed into disciplined and desperate soldiers? Why reserve our defence of the unhappy Louis till he had perished on the scaffold—our war against the French Republic until the fear of the executioner and the love of glory had made a nation unanimous in its defence? Success was possible when Prussia first entered on the contest: it was impossible when we subsidized her to continue it."

The antagonists of the First Minister urged these arguments with plausibility. His friends replied, "that Mr. Pitt had been originally against all interference in French affairs; that the conflict was not of his seeking; that the conduct of the French government and the feelings of the English people had at last forced him into it; that he had not wished to anticipate its necessity; but that if

he had, the minister of a free country cannot go to war at precisely the moment he would select; he cannot guard against evils which the public itself does not foresee. He must go with the public, or after it; and the public mind in England had, like that of the Ministers, only become convinced by degrees that peace was impossible.

"As to neutrality, if it could be observed when the objects at stake were material, it could not be maintained when those objects were moral, social, and religious.

"When new ideas were everywhere abroad, inflaming, agitating men's minds, these ideas were sure to find everywhere partisans or opponents, and to attempt to moderate the zeal of one party merely gave power to the violence of the other.

"It was necessary to excite the English people against France, in order to prevent French principles, as they were then called, from spreading and fixing themselves in England."

Such was the language and such the opinions of many eminent men with whom Mr. Canning was now associated, when, after a year's preliminary silence, he made his first speech in the House of Commons.

VI.

This first speech (January 31, 1794), like many first speeches of men who have become eminent orators, was more or less a failure. The subject was a subsidy to Sardinia, and the new member began with a scoff at the idea of looking with a mere mercantile eye at the goodness or badness of the bargain we were making. Such a scoff at economy, uttered in an assembly which is the especial guardian of the public purse, was injudicious. But the whole speech was bad; it possessed in an eminent degree all the ordinary faults of the declamations of clever young men. Its arguments were much too refined: its arrangement much too systematic: cold, tedious, and unparliamentary, it would have been twice as good if it had attempted half as much; for the great art in speaking, as in writing, consists in knowing what should not be said or written.

This instance of ill success did not, however, alienate

the Premier; for Mr. Pitt, haughty in all things, cared little for opinions which he did not dictate. In 1795, therefore, the unsubdued favourite was charged with the seconding of the address, and acquitted himself with some spirit and effect.

The following passage may be quoted both for thought and expression:

"The next argument against peace is its insecurity; it would be the mere name of peace, not a wholesome and refreshing repose, but a feverish and troubled slumber, from which we should soon be roused to fresh horrors and insults. What are the blessings of peace which make it so desirable? What, but that it implies tranquil and secure enjoyment of our homes? What, but that it will restore our seamen and our soldiers, who have been fighting to preserve those homes, to a share of that tranquillity and security? What, but that it will lessen the expenses and alleviate the burdens of the people? What, but that it explores some new channel of commercial intercourse, or reopens such as war had destroyed? What, but that it renews some broken link of amity, or forms some new attachment between nations, and softens the asperities of hostility and hatred into kindness and conciliation and reciprocal goodwill? And which of all these blessings can we hope to obtain by a peace, under the present circumstances, with France? Can we venture to restore to the loom or to the plough the brave men who have fought our battles? Who can say how soon some fresh government may not start up in France, which may feel it their inclination or their interest to renew hostilities? The utmost we can hope for is a short, delusive, and suspicious interval of armistice, without any material diminution of expenditure; without security at home, or a chance of purchasing it by exertions abroad; without any of the essential blessings of peace, or any of the possible advantages of war: a state of doubt and preparation such as will retain in itself all the causes of jealousy to other states which, in the usual course of things, produce remonstrances and (if these are answered unsatisfactorily) war."

VII

In 1796, Parliament was dissolved, and Mr. Canning was returned to Parliament this time for Wendover. He had just been named Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; and it has been usual to refer to this appointment as a proof of his early parliamentary success. He owed the promotion, however, entirely to the Prime Minister's favour; for though his late speech, better than the preceding one, had procured him some credit, there was still a careless impertinence in his manner, and a classical pedantry in his style, which were unsuitable to the taste of the House of Commons. Indeed, so much had he to reform in his manner, that he now remained, by, as it is said, Mr. Pitt's advice, silent for three years, endeavouring during this time to correct his faults and allow them to be forgotten.

It does not follow that he was idle. The *Anti-Jacobin*, started in 1797, under the editorship of Mr. Gifford, for the purpose which its title indicates, was commenced at the instigation and with the support of the old contributor to the *Microcosm*, and did more than any parliamentary eloquence could have done in favour of the anti-Jacobin cause.

"Must wit," says Mr. Canning, who had now to contend against the most accomplished humorists of his day, "be found alone on falsehood's side?" and having established himself as the champion of "Truth," he brought, no doubt, very useful and very brilliant arms to her service. The verses of "New Morality," spirited, exaggerated, polished, and virulent, satisfied the hatred without offending the taste (which does not seem to have been at that time very refined) of those classes who looked upon our neighbours with almost as much hatred and disgust as were displayed in the verses of the young poet; while the "Friend of Humanity and the Knife-grinder"—almost too trite to be quoted, and yet too excellent to be omitted—will long remain one of the happiest efforts of satire in our language:

"IMITATION SAPPHICS.

"THE FRIEND OF HUMANITY AND THE KNIFE-GRINDER.

"*Friend of Humanity:*

"Needy Knife-grinder, whither are you going?
Rough is the road,—your wheel is out of order;
Bleak blows the blast,—your hat has got a hole in't,
So have your breeches.

"Weary Knife-grinder, little think the proud ones,
Who in their coaches roll along the turnpike
Road, what hard work 'tis crying all day, 'Knives and
Scissors to grind, O!'

"Tell me, Knife-grinder, how came you to grind knives?
Did some rich man tyrannically use you?
Was it the squire, or parson of the parish,
Or the attorney?

"Was it the squire, for killing of his game? or
Covetous parson, for his tithes distraining?
Or roguish lawyer, made you lose your little
All in a lawsuit?

"Have you not read the 'Rights of Man,' by Tom Paine?
Drops of compassion tremble on my eyelids,
Ready to fall as soon as you have told your
Pitiful story.

"*Knife-Grinder:*

"Story! God bless you, I have none to tell, sir;
Only last night, a-drinking at the 'Chequers,'
These poor old hat and breeches, as you see, were
Torn in a scuffle.

"Constables came up for to take me into
Custody; they took me before the justice:
Justice Aldmixon put me in the parish
Stocks for a vagrant.

"I should be glad to drink your honour's health in
A pot of beer, if you will give me sixpence;
But, for my part, I never love to meddle
With politics, sir.

"*Friend of Humanity:*

"I give thee sixpence? I'll see thee damn'd first.
Wretch, whom no sense of wrong can rouse to vengeance!
Sordid, unfeeling, reprobate, degraded,
Spiritless outcast!"

[*Exit, kicking over the wheel, in a fit of universal philanthropy.*]

An instance of the readiness of Mr. Canning's Muse may be here related.

When Frere had completed the first part of the "Loves of the Triangles," he exultingly read over the following lines to Canning, and defied him to improve upon them:

"Lo! where the chimney's sooty tube ascends,
The fair Trochais from the corner bends!
Her coal-black eyes upturned, incessant mark
The eddying smoke, quick flame, and volant spark;
Mark with quick ken, where flashing in between,
Her much-loved *smoke-jack* glimmers thro' the scene;
Mark how his various parts together tend,
Point to one purpose,—in one object end;
The spiral grooves in smooth meanders flow,
Drags the long chain, the polished axles glow,
While slowly circumvolves the piece of beef below."

Canning took the pen, and added:

"The conscious fire with bickering radiance burns,
Eyes the rich joint, and roasts it as it turns."

These two lines are now blended with the original text, and constitute, it is said, the only flaw in Frere's title to the sole authorship of the first part of the poem, from which I have been quoting: the second and third parts were both by Canning.

In prose I cite the report of a peroration by Mr. Erskine, whose egotism could hardly be caricatured, at a meeting of the Friends of Freedom.

"Mr. Erskine concluded by recapitulating, in a strain of agonizing and impressive eloquence, the several more prominent heads of his speech: He had been a soldier, and a sailor, and had a son at Winchester School; he had been called by special retainers, during the summer, into

many different and distant parts of the country, travelling chiefly in post-chaises; he felt himself called upon to declare that his poor faculties were at the service of his country—of the free and enlightened part of it, at least. He stood here as a man; he stood in the eye, indeed in the hand, of God—to whom (in the presence of the company, and waiters) he solemnly appealed; he was of noble, perhaps royal blood; he had a house at Hampstead; was convinced of the necessity of a thorough and radical reform; his pamphlet had gone through thirty editions, skipping alternately the odd and even numbers; he loved the Constitution, to which he would cling and grapple; and he was clothed with the infirmities of man's nature; he would apply to the present French rulers (particularly *Barras* and *Reubel*) the words of the poet:

> "'Be to their faults a little blind;
> Be to their virtues ever kind,
> Let all their ways be unconfined,
> And clap the padlock on their mind!'

and for these reasons, thanking the gentlemen who had done him the honour to drink his health, he should propose '*Merlin*, the late Minister of Justice, under the Directory, and Trial by Jury.'"

I refer those who wish to know more of the literary merits of Mr. Canning to an article, July, 1858, in the "Edinburgh Review," in which article the accomplished writer has exhausted the subject he undertook to treat.

Nor was Mr. Canning's reputation for wit, at this time, gained solely by his pen. Living with few, though much the fashion, who could be more charming in his own accomplished circle—when, the pleasant thought lighting up his eye, playing about his mouth, and giving an indescribable charm to his handsome countenance, he abandoned himself to the inspiration of some happy moment, and planned a practical joke, or quizzed an incorrigible bore, or related some humorous anecdote? No one's society was so much prized by associates; no one's talents so highly estimated by friends; and his fame in the drawing-room, or at the dining-table, was at least as brilliant as that which he subsequently acquired in the senate.

This, indeed, was the epoch in his life at which perhaps he had the most real enjoyment; for though he felt conscious that his success in Parliament had not yet been complete, the feeling of certainty that it would become so, now began to dawn upon him, and the triumphs that his ardent nature anticipated went probably even beyond those which his maturer career accomplished.

VIII.

On the 11th of December, 1798, Mr. Tierney made a motion respecting peace with the French Republic. The negotiations at Lille, never cordially entered into, were at this time broken off. We had formed an alliance with Russia and the Porte, and were about to carry on the struggle with new energies, though certainly not under very encouraging auspices. The coalition of 1792-3 was completely broken up. Prussia had for three years been at peace with France; nor had the Cabinet of Vienna seen any objection to signing a treaty which, disgracefully to all parties, sacrificed the remains of Venetian liberty.

France, in the meanwhile, distracted at home, had, notwithstanding, enlarged her empire by Belgium, Luxemburg, Nice, Savoy, Piedmont, Genoa, Milan, and Holland. There were many arguments to use in favour of abandoning the struggle we had entered upon: the uncertain friendship of our allies; the increased force of our enemy; and the exhausting drain we were maintaining upon our own resources. In six years we had added one hundred and fifty millions to our debt, by which had been created the necessity of adding to our annual burdens eight millions, a sum equal to the whole of our expenditure when George III. came to the throne.

But the misfortunes which attend an expensive contest, though they necessarily irritate and dissatisfy a people with war, are not always to be considered irrefutable arguments in favour of peace. This formed the substance of the speech which Mr. Canning delivered on Mr. Tierney's motion. Defective in argument, it was effective in delivery, and added considerably to his reputation as a speaker.

In the meantime, our sworn enmity to France and to

French principles, encouraged an ardent inclination to both in those whom we had offended or misgoverned. The Directory in Paris and the discontented in Ireland had, therefore, formed a natural if not a legitimate league. The result was an Irish rebellion, artfully planned, for a long time unbetrayed, and which, but for late treachery and singular accidents, would not have been easily overcome.

Mr. Pitt, taking advantage of the fears of a separation between Great Britain and the sister kingdom, which this rebellion, notwithstanding its prompt and fortunate suppression, had created, announced, in a message from the Crown, a desire still further to incorporate and consolidate the two kingdoms. Whatever may have been the result of the Irish Union, the promises under which it was passed having been so long denied, so unhappily broken, there was certainly at this period reason to suppose that it would afford the means of instituting a fairer and less partial system of government than that under which Ireland had long been suffering.

As for the wail which was then set up, and which has since been re-awakened, for the independent Legislature which was merged into that of Great Britain, the facility with which it was purchased is the best answer which can be given to the assertions made of its value.

The part, therefore, that Mr. Canning adopted on this question (if with sincere and honest views of conferring the rights of citizenship on our Irish Catholic fellow-subjects, and not with the intention, which there is no reason to presume, of gaining their goodwill and then betraying their confidence) is one highly honourable to an English statesman. But another question now arose. That Catholic Emancipation was frequently promised as the natural result of the Union, has never been disputed. As such promises were made plainly and openly in Parliament, the King could not be supposed ignorant of them. Why, then, if his Majesty had such insuperable objections to their fulfilment, did he allow of their being made? And, on the other hand, how could his Ministers compromise their characters by holding out as a lure to a large majority of the Irish people a benefit which they

had no security for being able to concede? Mr. Canning's language is not ambiguous:

"Here, then, are two parties in opposition to each other, who agree in one common opinion; and surely if any middle term can be found to assuage their animosities, and to heal their discords, and to reconcile their jarring interests, it should be eagerly and instantly seized and applied. That an union is that middle term, appears the more probable when we recollect that the Popery code took its rise after a proposal for an union, which proposal came from Ireland, but which was rejected by the British government. This rejection produced the Popery code. If *an union were therefore acceded to, the Popery code would be unnecessary.* I say, if it was in consequence of the rejection of an union at a former period that the laws against Popery were enacted, it is fair to conclude that an union would render a similar code unnecessary—that an union would satisfy the friends of the Protestant ascendency, without passing new laws against the Catholics, and without maintaining those which are yet in force."*

The Union, nevertheless, was carried; the mention of Catholic Emancipation, in spite of the language just quoted, forbidden. Mr. Pitt (in 1801) retired.

IX.

There will always be a mystery hanging over the transaction to which I have just referred,—a mystery difficult to explain in a manner entirely satisfactory to the character of the King and his minister. One can only presume that the King was willing to let the Union be carried, on the strength of the Premier's promises, which he did not think it necessary to gainsay until he was asked to carry them into effect; and that the Minister counted upon the important service he would have rendered if the great measure he was bringing forward became law, for the influence that would be necessary to make his promises valid. It cannot be denied that each acted with a certain want of candour towards the other unbecoming their

* Speech on the King's Message relative to Union with Ireland, January 2, 1799.

respective positions, and that both behaved unfairly towards Ireland. Mr. Pitt sought to give consistency to his conduct by resigning; but he failed in convincing the public of his sincerity, because he was supposed to have recommended Mr. Addington, then Speaker of the House of Commons, and the son of a Doctor Addington, who had been the King's physician (to which circumstance the son owed a nickname he could never shake off), as his successor; and Mr. Addington was only remarkable for not being remarkable either for his qualities or for his defects, being just that staid, sober sort of man who, respectable in the chair of the House of Commons, would be almost ridiculous in leading its debates.

Thus an appointment which did not seem serious, perplexed and did not satisfy the public mind; more especially as the seceding minister engaged himself to support the new Premier, notwithstanding their difference of opinion on the very question on which the former had left office. The public did not know then so clearly as it does now that the King, who through his whole life seems to have been on the brink of insanity, was then in a state of mind that rendered madness certain, if the question of the Catholics, on which he had morbid and peculiar notions, was persistingly pressed upon him; and that Mr. Pitt thus, rightly or wrongly, thought it was his duty, after sacrificing office, to stop short of driving the master he had so long served into the gloom of despair. This, however, was a motive that could not be avowed, and consequently every sort of conjecture became current. Was the arrangement made on an understanding with the King, and would Mr. Pitt shortly resume the place he had quitted? Did Mr. Pitt, if there was no such arrangement, really mean to retain so incapable a person as Mr. Addington, at so important a time, at the head of the Government of England, or was his assistance given merely for the moment, with the intention of subsequently withdrawing it?

At first the aid offered to the new Premier by the old one was effective and ostentatious; but a great portion of the Opposition began also to support Mr. Addington,

intending in this way to allure him into an independence which, as they imagined, would irritate his haughty friend, and separate the *protégé* from the patron. The device was successful. The Prime Minister soon began to entertain a high opinion of his own individual importance, Mr. Pitt to feel sore at being treated as a simple official follower of the Government, which he had expected unofficially to command, and ere long he retired almost entirely from Parliament. He did not, however, acknowledge the least desire to return to power.

In this state of things, the conduct of Mr. Canning seemed likely to be the same as Mr. Pitt's, but it was not so. He did not, even for a moment, affect any disposition to share the partiality which the late First Lord of the Treasury began by testifying for the new one. Sitting in Parliament for a borough for which he had been elected through government influence, his conduct for a moment was fettered; but obtaining, at the earliest opportunity, a new seat (in 1802) by his own means—that is, by his own money—he then went without scruple into the most violent opposition.

His constant efforts to induce Achilles to take up his spear and issue from his tent, are recorded by Lord Malmesbury, and though not wholly disagreeable to his discontented chief, were not always pleasing to him. He liked, no doubt, to be pointed out as the only man who could direct successfully the destinies of England, and enjoyed jokes levelled at the dull gentleman who had become all at once enamoured of his own capacity; but he thought his dashing and indiscreet adherent passed the bounds of good taste and decorum in his attacks, and he disliked being pressed to come forward before he himself felt convinced that the time was ripe for his doing so. Too strong a show of reluctance might, he knew, discourage his friends; too ready an acquiescence compromise his dignity, and give an advantage to his enemies.

He foresaw, indeed, better than any one, all the difficulties that lay in his path. The unwillingness of the Sovereign to exchange a minister with whom he was at his ease, for a minister of whom he always stood in awe;

the unbending character of Lord Grenville, with whom he must of necessity associate, if he formed any government that could last, and who, nevertheless, rendered every difficulty in a government more difficult by his uncompromising character, his stately bearing, and his many personal engagements and connections. More than all, perhaps, he felt creeping over him what his friends did not see and would not believe—that premature decrepitude which consigned him, in the prime of life, to the infirmities of age. Thus, though he felt restless at being deprived of the only employment to which he was accustomed, he was not very eager about a prompt reinstatement in it, and preferred waiting until an absolute necessity for his services, and a crisis, on which he always counted, should float him again into Downing Street, over many obstacles against which his bark might otherwise be wrecked.

His real feelings, however, were matter of surmise; many people, not unnaturally, imagined that Mr. Canning represented them; and the energetic partisan, mixing with the world, derived no small importance from his well-known intimacy with the statesman in moody retirement. His marriage, moreover, at this time with Miss Joan Scott, one of the daughters of General Scott, and co-heiress with her sisters, Lady Moray and Lady Titchfield, brought him both wealth and connection, and gave a solidity to his position which it did not previously possess.

X.

In the meantime the Addington administration went on, its policy necessarily partaking of the timid and half-earnest character of the man directing it. Unequal to the burden and the responsibility of war, he had concocted a peace, but a peace of the character which Mr. Canning had previously described: "a peace without security and without honour:" a peace which, while it required some firmness to decline, demanded more to maintain, since the country was as certain to be at first pleased with it as to be soon ashamed of it. No administration would have had the boldness to surrender Malta; few would have been so weak as to promise the cession.

Indeed, almost immediately after concluding this halcyon peace, we find the Secretary of War speaking of "these times of difficulty and danger," and demanding "an increased military establishment." Nor was it long before an additional 10,000 men were also demanded for our naval service. On both these occasions Mr. Canning, supporting the demand of the Minister, attacked the Administration; and after stating his reasons for being in favour of the especial measure proposed, burst out at once into an eloquent exhibition of the reasons for his general opposition:

"I do think that this is a time when the administration of the Government ought to be in the ablest and fittest hands. I do not think the hands in which it is now placed answer to that description. I do not pretend to conceal in what quarter I think that fitness most eminently resides. I do not subscribe to the doctrines which have been advanced, that, in times like the present, the fitness of individuals for their political situations is no part of the consideration to which a Member of Parliament may fairly turn his attention. I know not a more solemn or important duty that a Member of Parliament can have to discharge than by giving, at fit seasons, a free opinion upon the character and qualities of public men. *Away with the cant of measures, not men—the idle supposition that it is the harness, and not the horse, that draws the chariot along.* No, sir; if the comparison must be made—if the distinction must be taken—measures are comparatively nothing, men everything. I speak, sir, of times of difficulty and danger—of times when systems are shaken, when precedents and general rules of conduct fail. Then it is that not to this or that measure, however prudently devised, however blameless in execution, but to the energy and character of individuals a state must be indebted for its salvation. Then it is that kingdoms rise and fall in proportion as they are upheld, not by well-meant endeavours (however laudable these may be), but by commanding, overawing talent—by able men. And what is the nature of the times in which we live? Look at France, and see what we have to cope with, and consider what has made her what she is—a man! You will tell

me that she was great, and powerful, and formidable before the date of Bonaparte's government—that he found in her great physical and moral resources—that he had but to turn them to account. True; and he did so. Compare the situation in which he found France with that to which he has raised her. I am no panegyrist of Bonaparte; but I cannot shut my eyes to the superiority of his talents—to the amazing ascendency of his genius. Tell me not of his measures and his policy. It is his genius, his character, that keeps the world in awe. Sir, to meet, to check, to curb, to stand up against him, we want arms of the same kind. I am far from objecting to the large military establishments which are proposed to you. I vote for them with all my heart. But, for the purpose of coping with Bonaparte, one great commanding spirit is worth them all!"*

Mr. Canning was right. No cant betrays more ignorance than that which affects to undervalue the qualities of public men in the march of public affairs. However circumstances may contribute to make individuals, individuals have as great a share in making circumstances. Had Queen Elizabeth been a weak and timid woman, we might now be speaking Spanish, and have our fates dependent on the struggle between Prim and Narvaez. Had James II. been a wise and prudent man,—instead of the present cry against Irish Catholics, our saints of the day would have been spreading charges against the violence and perfidy of some Puritan Protestant, some English, or perhaps Scotch, O'Connell. Strip Mirabeau of his eloquence, endow Louis XVI. with the courage and the genius of Henry IV., and the history of the last eighty years might be obliterated.

Mr. Canning, I repeat, was right; the great necessity in arduous times is a man who inspires other men; and the satirist, in measuring the two rivals for office, was hardly wrong in saying:

> "*As London to Paddington,*
> *So Pitt is to Addington.*"

* Speech on the Army Estimates, Dec. 8, 1802.

XI.

Well-adapted ridicule no public man can withstand, and there seems to have been something peculiar to Mr. Addington that attracted it. Even Mr. Sheridan, his steady supporter to the last (for the main body of the Whigs, under Mr. Fox, when they saw a prospect of power for themselves, uniting with the Grenvillites, went into violent opposition)—even Mr. Sheridan, in those memorable lines:

> "I do not love thee, Doctor Fell,
> The reason why I cannot tell;
> But this I know, and know full well,
> I do not love thee, Doctor Fell":

quoted in defence of the Minister whom so many attacked without saying why they disapproved, furnished a nickname that too well applied to him, and struck the last nail into the coffin that a mingled cohort of friends and enemies bore—a smile on their faces—to the tomb.

Previous to this, the war, which had been suspended by mutual bad faith, was recommenced, each party complaining of the other.

The man to whom Mr. Canning had been so long pointing now came into power, but was not precisely the man, in spite of Mr. Canning's eulogium, for the sort of crisis in which he assumed it. There was, indeed, a singular contrast in the life of Lord Chatham and that of his son. The first Pitt was essentially a war minister; he seemed to require the sound of the clarion and trumpet and of the guns proclaiming victory from the Tower, to call forth the force and instincts of his genius. In peace he became an ordinary person. The second Pitt, on the contrary, was as evidently a peace minister. In quiet times his government had been eminently successful. Orderly, regular, methodical, with a firm and lofty soul, and the purest motives for his guides, he had carried on the business of the country, steadily, prudently, and ably—heedless of the calumnies of envy, or the combinations of factions: but he wanted that imagination which furnishes resources on unexpected occasions. The mighty

convulsion which made the world heave under his feet did not terrify him, but it bewildered him; and nothing could be more unfortunate, or even more wavering, than his conduct when he had to deal with extraordinary events. Still, in one thing he resembled his father—he had unbounded confidence in himself. This sufficed for the moment to give confidence to others; and his stately figure, standing, in the imagination of the nation, by the side of Britannia, added to the indomitable courage of our mariners, and shed a kindred influence over the heroic genius of their chief. But though Mr. Pitt had in a supreme degree the talent of commanding the respect of his followers and admirers, he had not the genial nature which gives sway over equals; and Mr. Fox had of late won to himself many eminent persons who by their opinions and antecedents were more naturally disposed to join his rival. The Premier felt this difficulty, and being wholly above jealousy, would have coalesced with Mr. Fox, and formed a ministry strong in the abilities which at that critical time were so required. But George III., with a narrowness of mind that converted even his good qualities into defects, said, "Bring me whom you please, Mr. Pitt, except Fox." This exception put an end to the combination in view; for, in spite of Fox's disinterested remonstrances, or, perhaps, in consequence of them, none of his friends would quit his side.

Nevertheless, proud, accustomed to power, careless of responsibility, defying all opponents, inspiring awe by his towering person and sonorous voice, as well as by the lofty tone of his eloquence and the solitary grandeur of his disposition, alone in front of a stronger phalanx of adversaries than ever, perhaps, before or since, were marshalled against a minister,—Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan, Mr. Windham, the Grenvilles, Mr. Grey, Mr. Tierney—as daring and undaunted in appearance as in the first flush of his youthful glory, stood this singular personage, honoured even in his present isolation with the public hopes. But Fortune, which in less eventful moments had followed, chose this fatal moment for deserting him. In vain he turned to his most able supporter for assistance:

that early friend, more unfortunate than himself, stood disabled, and exposed to a disgraceful impeachment. The struggle was too severe; it wore out a spirit which nothing could bend or appal. On the 23rd of January, 1806, immediately after the news of the fatal battle of Austerlitz, which chilled the remains of life within him, and on the anniversary of the day on which, twenty-five years before, he had been returned to Parliament, Mr. Pitt died.

XII.

Lord Grenville and Mr. Fox (the King's antipathy was this time overborne by necessity) formed the new Ministry, in which Lord Sidmouth (late Mr. Addington), who, Mr. Canning said, "was like the small-pox, since everybody must have him once in their lives," was also included.

During the short time that Mr. Canning had lately held office, his situation as Treasurer of the Navy had invested him with the defence of Lord Melville, a defence which he conducted with much tact and ability, and to this his parliamentary labours had been confined. The employment of "All the Talents" (as the new Administration, comprising men of every party, was called) now left him almost alone amongst the parliamentary debaters in opposition. This position was a fortunate one.

In the most formidable and successful attacks against Lord Ellenborough's seat in the Cabinet, which was indefensible—against Mr. Windham's Limited Service Bill, of which party spirit denied the merits—he led the way. His success on all these occasions was great, and the style of his speaking now began to show the effects of care and experience. A less methodic mode of arguing, a greater readiness in replying, had removed the unprepossessing impression of previous study; while an artful rapidity of style permitted that polish of language which is too apt, when unskilfully employed, to become prolix, monotonous, and languid. It was this peculiar polish, accompanied by a studied though apparently natural rapidity, which, becoming more and more perfect as it became apparently more natural, subsequently formed the essential excellence of Mr. Canning's speaking; for his poetical illustrations

required the charm of his delivery, and his jokes, imitated from Mr. Sheridan, were rarely so good as their model; although, even in his manner of introducing and dealing with these, we may trace, as he advanced, a very marked improvement.

The coalition between parties at one time so adverse as those enlisted under the names of Fox, Grenville, and Addington, could only be maintained by the ascendency of that master-spirit which had been so long predominant in the House of Commons. But when Mr. Fox undertook the arduous duties of the Foreign Office, his health (that treasure which statesmen often spend with improvidence, and which he had wasted more than most men) was already beginning to fail, rendering heavy the duties of public life; and in 1806—while our diplomacy at Paris was making a last attempt to effect that honourable peace which had so long been the object of the worn-out minister's desires—that great statesman, whose generous and noble heart never deceived him, but whose singular capacity in debate was often marred by a remarkable want of judgment in action, followed his haughty predecessor to an untimely grave.

The Grenville Administration, after the death of Mr. Fox, was no more the former Administration of Lord Grenville than the mummy, superstitiously presumed to preserve the spirit of the departed, is the real living body of the person who has been embalmed. It avoided, however, the ignominy of a natural death, by being the first Administration which, according to Mr. Sheridan, "not only ran its head against a wall, but actually built a wall for the purpose of running its head against it." This instrument of suicide was the well-known bill "for securing to all his Majesty's subjects the privilege of serving in the Army and Navy." A measure which, by permitting Irish Catholics to hold a higher military rank than the law at that time allowed them, showed the Whig government to be true to its principles, but without tact or ability in carrying them out; for this bill, brought forward honourably but unadvisedly, withdrawn weakly, alarming many, and never granting much, dissatisfied the Catholics,

angered the Protestants, and gave the King the opportunity of sending a ministry he disliked about their business, on a pretext which there was sufficient bigotry in the nation to render popular. A dissolution amidst the yell of "No Popery!" took place; and it was by this cry that the party with which Mr. Canning now consented to act reinstalled itself in power.

XIII.

A person well qualified to know the facts of that time, once told me that, not very long before the dissolution of the Ministry to which he succeeded, at a time certainly when that dissolution was not so apparent, Mr. Canning had privately conveyed to Lord Grenville, who had previously made him an offer, his wish to secede from opposition, and had even received a promise that a suitable place (Mr. Windham's dismissal was at that time arranged) should be reserved for him. Reminded of this when affairs had become more critical, he is said to have observed, "it was too late." Whatever may be the truth as to this story—and such stories are rarely accurate in all their details—one thing is certain, the brilliant abilities of the aspiring orator, though then and afterwards depreciated by the dull mediocrity which affects to think wit and pleasantry incompatible with the higher and more serious attributes of genius, now became apparent, and carried him through every obstacle to the most important political situation in the country.

LIST OF MINISTERS.

	In March, 1807.	In April, 1807.
President of the Council	Viscount Sidmouth	Earl Camden.
Lord High Chancellor	Lord Erskine	Lord Eldon.
Lord Privy Seal	Lord Holland	Earl of Westmoreland.
First Lord of the Treasury	Lord Grenville	Duke of Portland.
First Lord of the Admiralty	Right Hon. T. Grenville	Lord Mulgrave.
Master-General of the Ordnance	Earl of Moira	Earl of Chatham.

LIST OF MINISTERS—*continued.*

	In March, 1807.	In April, 1807.
Secretary of State for the Home Office	Earl Spencer	Lord Hawkesbury (afterwards Lord Liverpool).
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs	Lord Howick	Mr. Canning.
Secretary for War and the Colonies	Right Hon. W. Windham	Lord Castlereagh.
President of the Board of Trade	Lord Auckland	Earl Bathurst.
Lord Chief Justice	Lord Ellenborough.	
Chancellor of the Exchequer	Lord H. Petty (afterwards Marquis of Lansdowne)	Hon. Spencer Perceval.
A seat in the Cabinet without office	Earl Fitzwilliam.	

It is remarkable enough that in the Whig or popular cabinet there was only one person (Mr. Windham)—a gentleman of great landed property, as well as of remarkable ability—who was not a lord or a lord's son. In the Tory cabinet Mr. Canning formed the only similar exception.

The principles on which the new Government stood in respect to the Irish Catholics were soon put to the test by Mr. Brand, afterwards Lord Dacre, who moved:

"That it is contrary to the first duties of the confidential servants of the Crown to restrain themselves by any pledge, expressed or implied, from offering to the King any advice which the course of circumstances may render necessary for the welfare and security of any part of his Majesty's extensive empire."

This motion was caused by the King having required the late Government to pledge itself not to bring forward any future measure of Catholic relief, and having dismissed it when it refused thus to fetter its judgment.

Mr. Canning rose amidst an unwilling audience. The imputations to which his early change of principles had exposed him were rather vividly confirmed by the recklessness with which he now appeared to be rushing into office

amongst colleagues he had lately professed to despise, and in support of opinions to which he was known to be opposed. The House received him coldly, and with cries of "Question," as he commenced an explanation or defence, marked by a more than usual moderation of tone and absence of ornament. The terms on which he had been with the former Administration were to a great degree admitted in the following passage:

"For myself, I confidently aver that on the first intimation which I received, from authority I believed to be unquestionable, of the strong difference of opinion subsisting between the King and his Ministers, I took the determination of communicating what I had learnt, and I did communicate it without delay to that part of the late Administration with which, in spite of political differences, I had continued, and with which, so far as my own feelings are concerned, I still wish to continue in habits of personal friendship and regard. I communicated it, with the most earnest advice and exhortation, that they should lose no time in coming to such an explanation and accommodation on the subject at issue as should prevent matters from going to extremities."

This statement, it is acknowledged, was perfectly correct; but it leaves untouched the tale just alluded to, and which represented the Minister, who was then making his explanations, as having been ready to join an Administration favourable to the Catholic claims, previous to his joining an Administration hostile to those claims. But though I have related this tale as I heard it, I do not pretend to vouch for its accuracy. But without denying or vouching for the truth of this tale (though the authority on which it rests is highly respectable), I may observe, it may be said that "no coalition can take place without previous compromise or intrigue," and that almost every Administration is formed or supported by coalition.

How, indeed, had the Administration which now gave way been originally composed? Of Mr. Windham, the loudest declaimer for war; of Mr. Fox, the most determined advocate of peace; of Lord Sidmouth, the constant

subject of ridicule to both Mr. Windham and Mr. Fox. There was Mr. Sheridan, the champion of annual Parliaments; Lord Grenville, opposed to all reform! Besides, it was at that time accepted as an axiom by a large number of the supporters of the Catholics, that the Sovereign's health created a justifiable reason for leaving the Catholic question in abeyance, and that the attempt to push it forward at an untimely moment would not really tend to its success.

Nor did Lord Castlereagh, who had always shown himself an honest champion of the Catholic cause, evince more scruples on this matter than the new Foreign Secretary. But if Mr. Canning's friends made excuses for him, Mr. Canning himself, always saying "that a thrust was the best parry," felt more disposed to attack the enemy than to defend himself; and many of the political squibs which turned the incapable Administration of "All the Talents" into ridicule, were attributed to his satirical fancy. From 1807 to 1810, he remained in office.

XIV.

The period just cited was marked by our interference in Spain, our attack on Copenhagen, and that expedition to the Scheldt, which hung during two years over the debates in Parliament, like one of the dull fogs of that river.

Our foreign policy, though not always fortunate, could no longer at least be accused of want of character and vigour. As to the intervention in Spain, though marked by the early calamity of Sir John Moore, it was still memorable for having directed the eye of our nation to the vulnerable point in that Colossus whom our consistency and perseverance finally brought to the ground.

The Danish enterprise was of a more doubtful character, and can only be judged of fairly by carrying our minds back to the moment at which it took place. That moment was most critical; every step we took was of importance. Before the armies of France, and the genius of her ruler, lay the vanquished legions of the north and south of

Germany. From the House of Hapsburg the crown of Charlemagne was gone; while the throne of the Great Frederick was only yet preserved in the remote city of Königsberg. In vain Russia protracted an inauspicious struggle. The battle of Friedland dictated peace. There remained Sweden, altogether unequal to the conflict in which she had plunged: Denmark protected by an evasive neutrality, which it was for the interest of neither contending party to respect. On the frontiers of Holstein, incapable of defence, hung the armies of France. Zealand and Funen, indeed, were comparatively secure, but people do not willingly abandon the most fertile of their possessions, or defy an enemy because there are portions of their territory which will not sink before the first attack.

Ministers laid some stress on their private information, and it is said that Sir R. Wilson, returning, perhaps it may be said escaping, with extraordinary diligence from Russia after the Peace of Tilsit, brought undeniable intelligence as to the immediate intentions of our new allies. But private information was useless. We do not want to know what a conqueror intends to do, when we know what his character and interests imperatively direct him to do. It would have been absurd, indeed, not to foresee that Napoleon could not rest in neutral neighbourhood on the borders of a country, the possession of which, whether under the title of amity or conquest, was eminently essential to his darling continental system, since through Tonningen were passed into Germany our manufactures and colonial produce. Had this, indeed, been disputable before the famous decree of the 21st of November,* that decree removed all doubts.

Denmark, then, had no escape from the mighty war raging around her, and had only to choose between the tyrant of the Continent or the mistress of the seas. If she declared against us, as it was likely she would do, her navy, joined to that of Russia, and, as it soon would be, to that of Sweden, formed a powerful force—not, indeed, for

* A virtual declaration of hostility against every neutral power.

disputing the empire of the ocean; there we might safely have ventured to meet the world in arms; but for assisting in those various schemes of sudden and furtive invasion which each new continental conquest encouraged and facilitated—encompassed, as we became, on all sides by hostile shores. But if the neutrality of the Danes was impossible, if their fleet, should they become hostile to us, might add materially to our peril, was it wrong to make them enter frankly into our alliance, if that were possible, or to deprive them of their worst means of mischief, if they would not?

After all, what did we say to Denmark?—"You cannot any longer retain a doubtful position; you must be for us, or we must consider you against us. '*If a friend, you may count on all the energy and resources of Great Britain.*'" Denmark had offered to sell a large portion of her marine to Russia, and we offered to purchase it manned. It was required, she said, to defend Zealand; we offered to defend Zealand for her.

But our negotiation failed, and finally we seized, as belonging to a power which was certain to become an enemy, the ships with which she refused to aid us as an ally. A state must be in precisely similar circumstances before it can decide whether it ought to do precisely a similar thing.

Some blamed our conduct as unjust, whilst others praised it as bold. What perhaps may be said is, that if unjust at all, it was not bold enough. War once commenced, Zealand should have been held; the stores and supplies in the merchant docks not left unnoticed; the passage of the Sound kept possession of. In short, our assault on Copenhagen should have been part of a permanent system of warfare, and not suffered to appear a mere temporary act of aggression.

Still it showed in the Minister who planned and stood responsible for it, three qualities, by no means common: secrecy, foresight and decision.

XV.

But if our conduct towards the Danes admits of defence, luckily for Mr. Canning the odium of that miserable expedition against Holland—in which

> "Lord Chatham, with his sword undrawn,
> Stood waiting for Sir Richard Strachan;
> Sir Richard, longing to be at 'em,
> Stood waiting for the Earl of Chatham;"

an expedition equally disgraceful to ministers and commanders—fell chiefly on his colleague, who had originated and presided over it, having himself been present at the embarkation.

It is necessary here to say a word or two concerning that statesman, who, though agreeing with Mr. Canning upon the principal question of their time, was never cordially united with him. Lord Castlereagh joined to great boldness in action,—great calm and courtesy of manner, long habits of official routine, and a considerable acquaintance with men collectively and individually. He lived in the world, and was more essentially a man of the world than his eloquent contemporary; but, on the other hand, he was singularly deficient in literary accomplishments, and this deficiency was not easily pardoned in an assembly, the leading members of which had received a classical education, and were as intolerant to an ungrammatical phrase as to a political blunder. His language—inelegant, diffuse, and mingling every variety of metaphorical expression—was the ridicule of the scholar. Still the great air with which he rose from the Treasury Bench, threw back his blue coat, and showed his broad chest and white waistcoat, looking defiance on the ranks of the Opposition, won him the hearts of the rank and file of the government adherents. In affairs, he got through the details of office so as to satisfy forms, but not so as to produce results: for if the official men who can manufacture plans on paper are numerous, the statesmen who can give them vitality in action are rare; and Lord Castlereagh was not one of them.

There was never, as I have just said, any great cor-

diality or intimacy between two persons belonging to the same party and aspiring equally to play the principal part in it. The defects of each, moreover, were just of that kind that would be most irritating to the eye of the other; but they would probably have gone on rising side by side, if they had not now been thrown together and almost identified in common action. The success of most of Mr. Canning's schemes as Minister of Foreign Affairs depended greatly upon the skill with which Lord Castlereagh, as Minister of War, carried them into execution; any error of the latter affected the reputation of the former; thus the first difficulty was sure to produce a quarrel. Mr. Canning indeed was constantly complaining that every project that was conceived by the Foreign Office miscarried when it fell under the care of the War Office; that all the gold which he put into his colleague's crucible came out, somehow or other, brass; and these complaints were the more bitter, since, involuntarily influenced by his rhetorical predilections, he could not help exaggerating the consequences of mistakes in conduct, which were aggravated by mistakes in grammar.

Nevertheless, wishing, very probably, to avoid a public scandal, he merely told the head of the Government privately that a change must take place in the Foreign or in the War Department, and, after some little hesitation, the removal of Lord Castlereagh was determined on; but some persons from whom, perhaps, that statesman had no right to expect desertion, anxious to keep their abandonment of him concealed as long as possible, requested delay; and the Duke of Portland, a man of no resolution, not daring to consent to the resignation of one of the haughty gentlemen with whom he had to deal, was glad to defer the affront that it was intended to put on to the other. Such being the state of things, Mr. Canning was prevailed upon to allow the matter to stand over for a while, receiving at the same time the most positive assurances as to his request being finally complied with. At the end of the session and the conclusion of the enterprise (against Flushing) already undertaken, some arrangement was to be proposed, "satisfactory, it was hoped, to all parties."

Such is the usual hope of temporising politicians. But, in the meantime, the Secretary of War was allowed to suppose that he carried into the discharge of the duties of his high post, all the confidence and approbation of the Cabinet.

This was not a pleasant state of things to discover in the moment of adversity; when the whole nation felt itself disgraced at the pitiful termination of an enterprise which had been very lavishly prepared and very ostentatiously paraded. Yet such was the moment when Mr. Canning, fatigued at the Premier's procrastination, disgusted by the calamity which he attributed to it, and resolved to escape, if possible, from a charge of incapacity, beneath which the whole Ministry was likely to be crushed, threw up his appointment, and the unfortunate Secretary of War learnt that for months his abilities had been distrusted by a majority of the Cabinet in which he sat, and his situation only provisionally held on the ill-extorted acquiescence of a man he did not like, and who underrated and disliked him. His irritation vented itself in a letter which produced a duel—a duel that Mr. Canning was not justly called upon to fight; for all that he had done was to postpone a decision he had a perfect right to adopt, and which he deferred expressly in order to spare Lord Castlereagh's feelings and at the request of Lord Castlereagh's friends. But the one of these gentlemen was quite as peppery and combative as the other, though it appeared he was not quite so good a shot, for Mr. Canning missed his opponent and received a disagreeable wound, though not a dangerous one; the final result of the whole affair being the resignation of the Premier and of the two Secretaries of State, the country paying twenty millions (the cost of the late barren attempt at glory) because the friends of a minister had shrunk from saying anything unpleasant to him until he was prostrate.

Part II.

FROM MR. PERCEVAL'S ADMINISTRATION TO ACCEPTANCE OF THE GOVERNOR-GENERALSHIP OF INDIA.

Mr. Perceval, Prime Minister.—Lord Wellesley, Minister of Foreign Affairs. —King's health necessitates regency.—The line taken by Mr. Canning upon it. —Conduct with respect to Mr. Horner's Finance Committee.—Absurd resolution of Mr. Vansittart.—Lord Wellesley quits the Ministry.—Mr. Perceval is assassinated.—Mr. Canning and Lord Wellesley charged to form a new Cabinet, and fail.—Further negotiations with Lords Grey and Grenville fail.—Lord Liverpool becomes head of an Administration which Mr. Canning declines to join.—Accepts subsequently embassy to Lisbon, and, in 1816, enters the Ministry.—Supports coercive and restrictive measures.—Resigns office at home after the Queen's trial, and accepts the Governor-Generalship of India.

I.

A new Administration brought Lord Wellesley to the Foreign Office, and Mr. Perceval to the head of affairs.

In 1810 the state of the King's health came once more before the public. Parliament met in November; the Sovereign was this time admitted by his courtiers to be unmistakedly insane. A commission had been appointed, but there was no speech with which to address the Houses; no authority to prorogue them. Mr. Perceval moved certain resolutions. These resolutions were important, for they furnished a text for debate, and settled the question so much disputed in 1788-9, deciding (for no one was found to take up the old and unpopular arguments of Mr. Fox) that Parliament had the disposal of the Regency; and that the Heir-apparent, without the sanction of the Legislature, had no more right to it than any other individual. These first resolutions were followed by others, expressive of a determination to confer the powers of the Crown on the Prince of Wales, but not without restrictions. Here arose a new question, and of this question Mr. Canning availed himself. Interest and consistency alike demanded that he should stand fast to the traditions of

Mr. Pitt, whose name was still the watchword of a considerable party. But Mr. Pitt had alike contended for the right of Parliament to name the Regent, and for the wisdom of fettering the Regency by limitations. Whereas Mr. Canning, though advocating the powers of Parliament to name the Regent, was not in favour of limiting the Regent's authority. Through these confronting rocks the wary statesman steered with the skill of a veteran pilot:*

"The rights of the two Houses," said he, "were proclaimed and maintained by Mr. Pitt; that is the point on which his authority is truly valuable. The principles upon which this right was affirmed and exercised are true for all times and all occasions. If they were the principles of the Constitution in 1788, they are equally so in 1811; the lapse of twenty-two years had not impaired, the lapse of centuries could not impair them. But the mode in which the right so asserted should be exercised, the precise provisions to be framed for the temporary substitution of the executive power—these were necessarily then, as they must be now, matters not of eternal and invariable principle, but of prudence and expediency. In regard to these, therefore, the authority of the opinion of any individual, however great and wise and venerable, can be taken only with reference to the circumstances of the time in which he has to act, and are not to be applied without change or modification to other times and circumstances."†

II.

Thus, all that partisanship could demand in favour of an abstract principle, was religiously accorded to the *manes* of the defunct statesman; and a difference as wide as the living Prince of Wales could desire, established between the theory that no one any longer disputed, and the policy which was the present subject of contention. Here Mr. Canning acted with tact and foresight if he merely acted as a political schemer. The Royal personage on whom power was about to devolve had always expressed

* This is one of the portions from my original sketch, which it would appear that Mr. Bell consulted and copied. See Appendix.

† Speech on Regency Question, Dec. 31, 1810.

the strongest dislike, not to say disgust, at any abridgment of the Regal authority. He was likely to form a new Administration. The Whigs, it is true, were then considered the probable successors to power; but the Whigs would want assistance; and subsequent events showed that a general feeling had begun to prevail in favour of some new combination of men less exclusive than could be found in the ranks of either of the extreme and opposing parties. But it is fair to add that the course which Mr. Canning might have taken for his private interest, he had every motive to take for the public welfare.

Beyond the personal argument of the sick King's convenience—an argument which should hardly guide the policy or affect the destinies of a mighty kingdom—Mr. Perceval had not, for the restrictions he proposed, one resonable pretext. It might, indeed, be agreeable to George III., if he recovered from his sad condition, to find things and persons as he had left them; and to recognise that all the functions of Government had been palsied since the suspension of his own power. But if ever the hands of a sovereign required to be strongly armed, it was most assuredly in those times. They were no times of ease or peace in which a civilized people may be said to govern themselves; neither were we merely at war. The war we were waging was of life or death; the enemy with whom we were contending concentrated in his own mind, and wielded with his own hand, all the force of Europe. This was not a moment for enfeebling the Government that had to contend against him. The power given to the King or Regent in our country is not, let it be remembered, an individual and irresponsible power. It is a National power devolving on responsible Ministers, who have to account to the nation for the use they make of it.

"What," said Mr. Canning (having assumed and asserted the right of the two Houses of Parliament to supply the incapacity of the sovereign)—"what is the nature of the business which through incapacity stands still, and which we are to find the means of carrying on? It is the business of a mighty state. It consists in the exercise of

functions as large as the mind can conceive—in the regulation and direction of the affairs of a great, a free, and a powerful people: in the care of their internal security and external interests; in the conduct of foreign negotiations; in the decision of the vital questions of peace and war; and in the administration of the Government throughout all the parts, provinces, and dependencies of an empire extending itself into every quarter of the globe. This is the awful office of a king; the temporary execution of which we are now about to devolve upon the Regent. What is it, considering the irresponsibility of the Sovereign as an essential part of the Constitution,—what is it that affords a security to the people for the faithful exercise of these all-important functions? The responsibility of Ministers. What are the means by which these functions operate? They are those which, according to the inherent imperfection of human nature, have at all times been the only motives to human actions, the only control upon them of certain and permanent operation, viz., the punishment of evil, and the reward of merit. Such, then, being the functions of monarchical government, and such being the means of rendering them efficient to the purposes of good government, are we to be told that in providing for its delegation, while it is not possible to curtail those powers which are in their nature harsh and unpopular, it is necessary to abridge those milder, more amiable and endearing prerogatives which bear an aspect of grace and favour towards the subject?"

III.

There was no answer to Mr. Canning, but a very practical one. Mr. Perceval thought that the King would shortly recover and keep him in office—and that the Regent, if his Royal Highness had but the power, would forthwith turn him out of it. Such an argument might satisfy a more scrupulous minister. In vain, therefore, was it urged, "If the powers of a monarch are not necessary now, they are never necessary. In consulting the possible feelings of the sick King, you are injuring the certain interests of kingly authority."

The passions or interests of a faction will ever ride high over its principles; and for a second time within half a century the theory of monarchy received the greatest practical insult from a high Tory minister. That the House of Commons thought a new era at hand was seen by its divisions. On the motion of Mr. Lamb (afterwards Lord Melbourne) against the "Restrictions," the majority in favour of Government was but 224 to 200.

A variety of circumstances, however, to which allusion will presently be made, prevented the general expectation from being realized. The Government remained, but it was not a Government that seemed likely to be of long duration. On one important question Mr. Canning almost immediately opposed it.

IV.

The report of a committee, distinguished for its ability, had attributed the depreciation in the value of bank-notes to their excessive issue, and recommended a return, within two years, to cash payments. Mr. Canning had belonged to this committee, and had given the subject, however foreign to his customary studies, much attention. The view which he took upon the sixteen resolutions moved by Mr. Horner, May 8, 1811, was, perhaps, the best. To all those resolutions, which went to fix as a principle that a real value in metal should be the proper basis for a currency—a general landmark, by which legislation should, as far as it was practicable, be guided—he assented; that particular resolution, which, under the critical circumstances of the country, went to fetter and prescribe the moment at which this principle should be resumed, he opposed.

Such opposition was unavailing; and History instructs us, by the resolution which Mr. Vansittart then proposed, that no absurdity is so glaring as to shock the eye of prejudiced credulity.

"May 13, 1811.

"Resolution III.—'*That it is the opinion of this committee* (a committee of the whole House) *that the promissory notes of the company* (the Bank) *have hitherto been, and are at this time, held in public estimation to be*

equivalent to the legal coin of the realm, and generally accepted as such.'"

The Chancellor of the Exchequer thus called upon the House of Commons to assert, that the public esteemed a twenty shilling bank-note as much as twenty shillings; and it had just been necessary to frame a law to prevent persons giving more than £1 and 1 shilling for a guinea, and all the guineas had disappeared from England. It had just been found expedient to raise the value of crown-pieces from 5*s.* to 5*s.* 6*d.* (which was, in fact, to reduce £1 in paper to the value of 18*s.*), in order to prevent crown-pieces from disappearing also. Persons were in prison for buying guineas at a premium; whilst pamphlets and papers were universally and daily declaring that the notes of the company were not at that time held in public estimation to be equivalent to the legal coin of the realm.

"When Galileo," said Mr. Canning, "first promulgated the doctrine that the earth turned round the sun, and that the sun remained stationary in the centre of the universe, the holy father of the Inquisition took alarm at so daring an innovation, and forthwith declared the first of these propositions to be false and heretical, and the other to be erroneous in point of faith. The holy office pledged itself to believe that the earth was stationary and the sun movable. But this pledge had little effect in changing the natural course of things: the sun and the earth continued, in spite of it, to preserve their accustomed relations to each other, just as the coin and the bank-note will, in spite of the right honourable gentleman's resolution."—[Report of Bullion Committee.]

But if the opposition had the best of the debate, the minister triumphed in the division; nevertheless so equivocal a success, whilst lowering the character of Parliament, did not heighten that of the Ministry.

Mr. Perceval, indeed, though possessing the quick, sharp mind of a lawyer, and the small ready talent of a debater, was without any of those superior qualities which enable statesmen to take large views. Great as an advocate, he was small as a statesman. Lord Wellesley

at last revolted at his supremacy, and, quitting the government, observed that "he might serve *with* Mr. Perceval, but could never serve *under* him again."

V.

About this time expired the period during which the Regency restrictions had been imposed; and not long after, the Premier (being confirmed in office by new and unsuccessful attempts to remodel the Administration) was assassinated by a madman (11 May, 1812).

The cabinet, which with Mr. Perceval was weak, without Mr. Perceval seemed impossible; and all persons at the moment were favourable to such a fusion of parties as would allow of the formation of a Cabinet, powerful and efficient.

Lord Wellesley, a man who hardly filled the space in these times for which his great abilities qualified him (co-operating with Mr. Canning, who was to be leader in the House of Commons), was selected as the statesman through whom such a Cabinet was to be formed. But Lord Liverpool, from personal reasons, at once declined all propositions from Lord Wellesley. Another negotiation was then opened, the basis proposed for a new ministry being that four persons should be returned to the Cabinet by Lord Wellesley and Mr. Canning; four (of whom Lord Erskine and Lord Moira were two) by the Prince Regent; and five by Lords Grey and Grenville, whilst the principles agreed to by all, were to be the vigorous prosecution of the war, and the immediate conciliation of the Catholics. The vigorous prosecution of the war and the conciliation of the Catholics were assented to; nor was it stated that the other conditions were inadmissible, though it was suggested that there would be a great inconvenience in making the Cabinet Council a debating society, and entering it with hostile and rival parties. Lord Wellesley returned to the Regent for further orders. But his Royal Highness deemed it expedient to consider that Lord Wellesley's attempt had been a failure, and the task which had been given to him was transferred to Lord Moira. This nobleman, vain, weak, and honest, undertook the

commission, and a new treaty was commenced with Lords Grey and Grenville, whose conduct at this time, it must be added, seems at first sight unintelligible; for they were granted every power they could desire in political matters. But there were various personal and private reasons which rendered all arrangements difficult. In the first place, Lord Grey is said to have despised, and never to have trusted the Prince, who, as he believed, was merely playing with the Whig party. In the next, Lord Grenville could not make up his mind to resign the auditorship of the exchequer, a certain salary for life, nor to accept a lower office than that of First Lord of the Treasury, while the union of the two offices, the one being a check upon the other, was too evident a job to escape observation; indeed, Mr. Whitbread had positively said that he could never support such a combination.

Thus, a variety of petty interests made any pretext sufficient to interfere with the completion of a scheme which every one was eager to counsel, no one ready to adopt. The most ungracious pretext, that of dictating the Regent's household, was chosen for a rupture; but it happened to chime in with the popular cry, which was loud against the influence of Hertford House; as may be seen by the speeches of the day, and particularly by a speech from Lord Donoughmore, in which he talks of the Marchioness of Hertford, to whose veteran seductions the Regent was then supposed to have fallen a victim, as "a matured enchantress" who had by "potent spells" destroyed all previous prepossessions, and taken complete possession of the Royal understanding.

VI.

There was as much bad taste as impolicy in these attacks; and the long-pending struggle terminated at last in favour of Lord Liverpool, who on June 8, 1812, declared himself Prime Minister. Why did Mr. Canning, who was solicited at the close of the session to join Lord Liverpool's Administration, decline to do so? Not because he was personally hostile to Lord Liverpool: he was warmly attached to that nobleman; not because the

Administration was exclusive, and only admitted those who were hostile to the Catholic Question: for he subsequently says (May 18, 1819): "I speak with perfect confidence when I assert that those who gave their support to the present Ministry on its formation, did so on the understanding that every member of it entered into office with the *express stipulation* that he should maintain his own opinion in Parliament on the Catholic Question."

Mr. Stapleton says it was because his friends thought that to the Foreign Office, which he was offered, ought to have been added the lead in the House of Commons, which Lord Liverpool would not withdraw from Lord Castlereagh. But Mr. Canning eventually became a member of the Government whose fate he now declined to share, leaving to Lord Castlereagh the lead in the House of Commons. How, then, are we to account for this difference of conduct at two different epochs?

An explanation may thus be found: During the years 1810 and 1811, our continental policy had still remained unfortunate. True it was that, by the unexpected skill and unexampled energy of our new commander, we gained, during 1811, the possession of Portugal, driving from that country a general who had hitherto been equally conspicuous for his talents and his fortune. But the whole of the Spanish frontier, and the greatest part of Spain itself, was held by the French armies; while the victory of Wagram, the revolution in Sweden, the marriage of Napoleon, the birth of the King of Rome, had greatly added to the weight and apparent stability of the French empire.

Our differences with the United States had also continually increased; and in 1812, war, which had long been impending, was declared and justified in an eloquent and able statement by Mr. Madison.

In the meantime Napoleon, surrounded by that luminous mystery which gave a kind of magic to his actions, was marching in all the pomp of anticipated triumph against the remote and solitary state which alone, on the humbled and subjugated continent, had yet the means and the courage to dispute his edicts and defy his power. Up to the 14th of September, when he entered Moscow, his

career was more marvellous, his glory more dazzling than ever.

VII.

Such was the state of foreign affairs when Mr. Canning and his friends refused to connect themselves with a feeble and self-mistrusting administration. But the year following things were strangely altered. The retreat from Russia had taken place; the battle of Leipsic had been fought. Russians, Austrians, Saxons, Swedes, Bavarians, Spaniards, Portuguese, the people of those various nations, who had formerly to defend their own territory, were now pouring into France.

The first gleams of victory shone over the gloomy struggle of twenty years. An accident yet unexplained—the burning of a city on the farthest confines of the civilized world—had changed the whole face of European affairs. "The mighty deluge," to use Mr. Canning's poetical language, "by which the Continent had been so long overwhelmed, began to subside. The limits of nations were again visible, and the spires and turrets of ancient establishments began to re-appear from beneath the subsiding wave." *

From this moment Mr. Canning began to show confidence in a ministry which he had hitherto more or less despised. The desire of sustaining it in this crisis of the terrible conflict in which we were engaged, had no doubt some influence over his conduct; but I venture to add that there are natures which, without being instigated by low and vulgar motives, have a propensity to harmonize with success. Mr. Canning's nature was of this description. It loved the light to shine on its glittering surface; and he began to feel a sympathy for the Government, bright with the rays of anticipated fortune, which in darker moments he had shrunk from with antipathy and mistrust.

VIII.

Napoleon fell shortly afterwards, and Mr. Huskisson, the most celebrated of Mr. Canning's followers, was

* Speech on vote of thanks to the Marquis of Wellington, July 7, 1813.

gazetted as Commissioner of Woods and Forests; Mr. Canning himself (who at the last general election had been honoured by the unsolicited representation of Liverpool) accepting an embassy to Lisbon. His acceptance of this office was one of the actions of his life for which he was most attacked; it was considered a job; for an able minister (Mr. Sydenham), on a moderate salary, was recalled, in order to give the eminent orator, whose support the Government wished to obtain, the appointment of ambassador on a much larger salary: and although, when Mr. Lambton (afterwards Lord Durham) brought forward a motion on the subject, Mr. Canning made a triumphant reply to the specific charges brought against his nomination, and although he was altogether above the accusation of accepting any post for the mere sake of its emoluments, it was nevertheless clear that it was because he was going to Lisbon for the health of his son, and that it was more agreeable to him to go in an official position than as a simple individual, that he had been employed, and his predecessor removed. It is needless to add he would have acted more wisely had he not accepted a post in which little credit was to be gained and much censure was to be risked.

On his return from Portugal he entered the Cabinet at the head of the Board of Control.

During his absence many events had occurred to characterize the Administration he joined. Peace finally established on the prostrate armies of France, which at Waterloo had made their last struggle, left the war which we had pursued with so lavish an expenditure, and so desperate a determination, to be estimated by its results. Whatever the necessity of this war at its commencement, the cause under which it had been continued for the last fourteen years was sacred.

A military chief at the head of a valorous soldiery, had during this time trampled on the rights and feelings of almost every people in Europe. The long-established barriers of independent states had been shifted or pulled down like hurdles, to make them fit the increasing or diminishing drove of cattle which it suited the caprices of

the French ruler that they should contain. The inhabitants of such states, treated little better than mere cattle, had been seized, sold, bartered, given away. It was no marvel, then, that the conquerors became in the end the conquered; for the struggle was one which commenced by all the kings marching against one people, and concluded by every people marching against one warrior. They invoked—these new assailants—what is best in philosophy, morality, policy; they conquered, and what did philosophy, morality, policy gain? Were rights and natural sympathies respected? Were old landmarks restored?

The peace alluded to was said to be a peace founded on justice, and justice never deserts the weak; yet Genoa was gone; Venice was no more; Poland remained partitioned; Saxony had been plundered by Prussia with as unsparing a hand as that by which she herself had been despoiled during the conquests of France. Norway, by a treaty, which Mr. Canning had said, in 1813, when still unshackled by office, "filled him with shame, regret, and indignation," was become the unwilling recompense to Sweden for the loss of a province of which a mightier power had taken possession. A struggle of the fiercest nature had been steadily maintained merely for the sake of restoring things to their old condition; and no nation not pre-eminent in power got back its own, except Spain, which recovered the Inquisition.* Even Holland was not re-invested with her ancient liberties, her old noble republican name. Stripped of her glorious history, and weakened by the addition of four millions of discontented subjects, the statesmen of the day fancied her more august and more secure. The errors committed at this time were those of a system; for there were two courses to pursue in the re-settlement of Europe. Had it appeared that, after a conflict of nearly thirty years, during which violence had held unlimited sway, everything which was dear to the people it concerned, and which still stood forth vivid in history, was endowed with a new reality; that at the overthrow of wrongful power, the right of the

* See *Appendix*.

meanest was everywhere weighed, and the right of the weakest everywhere established: had it appeared that the mightiest captain of modern times had only been vanquished by a principle—which, if the general interest could predominate, would regulate the destinies of the world—then indeed a lesson, of which it is impossible to calculate the effects, would have been given to all future ambitious disturbers of mankind: while the lovers of peace and virtue in every portion of the globe, even in France, would have seen something holy in the triumph which had been gained, and gathered round the cause of the allies. But if this was one policy, there was also another, and that other was adopted.

IX.

As Bonaparte had cut up and parcelled out nations for the purpose of enlarging the boundaries and strengthening the dominions of France, so the conquerors of Bonaparte spoiled and partitioned with equal zeal, in order to control the boundaries and restrain the dominion of the warlike people they had defeated. The limits imposed by right, justice, antiquity, custom, were all disregarded, and an attempt, by preference, made to throw up against all future schemes of conquest the patchwork barrier of ill-united and discordant populations.

Such had been the termination of affairs in Europe; but our contest with America was also over. We had made a treaty with that Power—a treaty so contrived that it did not settle a single one of those questions for which we had engaged in war. Nor were the circumstances under which this singular arrangement was completed such as compelled us to accede to it. The whole force of the British empire was disengaged; we could no longer say that our fleets were not invincible in one quarter of the world because their strength was exerted in another; whilst, if we meant to keep the dominion of the seas—more important to us than the whole of that continent we had been subsidizing and contending upon—there was every peril to apprehend from leaving unchecked the spirit of a rising rival, who had lately fought and fre-

quently vanquished us on our own element, and who during a long peace would have the opportunity to mature that strength of which she was already conscious and proud. In short, the peace of Europe affected our character for morality, that of America weakened the belief in our power.

Mr. Canning would hardly have joined an Administration which had so mismanaged our foreign affairs, if the glory of our arms had not gilded in some degree the faults of our diplomacy. But the part which that diplomacy had played on the Continent was not without its effect upon things at home. We had become each year more and more alienated from our military allies, who having triumphed by the enthusiasm of their people, seemed disposed to govern by the bayonets of their troops. The Holy Alliance—that singular compact, invented partly by the superstition, partly by the policy of the Emperor Alexander—an alliance by which three sovereigns, at the head of conquering armies, swore in very mystical language to govern according to the doctrines of Christian charity, swearing also (which was more important) to lend each other assistance on all occasions, and in all places—this alliance, which no one could clearly understand, and which our Government refused to join, excited all the suspicion and all the apprehension which mystery never fails to produce, and made Englishmen, while they were rejoicing at having subdued an overgrown and despotic tyranny in one quarter of the world, doubt whether they might not have created as dangerous a one in another.

X.

Nor was this all. They who begin to be dissatisfied with the fruits of victory, soon grow more and more dissatisfied with what victory has cost. Moreover, this period, from a variety of circumstances, some of them inseparable from the sudden transition from active war to profound peace, was one of great uncertainty and distress; whilst the public mind, no longer excited by military conflict, was the more disposed to political agitation. A demand for diminished imposts, and a demand for political

reform, are always to be expected at such moments. Our form of government led more naturally to these demands, for the theory of the constitution was at variance with its practice; the one saying that Englishmen should be taxed by their representatives, the other proving that they were in many instances taxed by persons who represented a powerful patron or a petty constituency, and not the people of England. The evils complained of were exaggerated; there were exaggerations also as to the remedies for which the most violent of the clamorous called. But the thoughts of the nation were directed to economy as a relief from taxation, and to parliamentary reform as a means of economy. Public meetings in favour of parliamentary reform were held; resolutions in favour of parliamentary reform were passed; petitions praying for it were presented; the energies of a free people, who thought themselves wronged, were aroused: great excitement prevailed.

XI.

The vessel of the state in these sudden squalls requires that those at the helm should govern it with a calm heart and a steady hand. Anger and fear are equally to be avoided, for they lead equally to violent measures, and the excitement of one party only feeds the excitement of the other.

Lord Castlereagh, the leading spirit at this time in the Cabinet, vapid and incorrect as an orator, inefficient as an administrator, was still, as I have elsewhere said, not without qualities as a statesman—for he was cool and he was courageous; and, therefore, if we now see him acting as if under the influence of the most slavish apprehension, we must look for some reasonable motive for his appearing to entertain fears which he could not have really felt.

Now, the fact is, that he had but two things to do—to satisfy the discontented as aggrieved, or to rally the majority of the country against them as disaffected. The first policy would not keep his party in power; the second, therefore, was the one he preferred. The terrors of the timid were to be awakened; the passions of the haughty were to be aroused; the designs of the mal-

contents were to be darkened—their strength increased—in short, to save the Ministry, it was essential that the State should be declared in danger. This is an old course; it has been tried often: it was tried now.

Thus Government opened the Session of 1817 with a "green bag." This bag, a true Pandora's box, contained threats of every mischief—assassination, incendiarism, insurrection, in their most formidable and infuriated shapes. One conspiracy, indeed, was a model that deserves to be set apart for the use of future conspirators or—statesmen. It comprehended the storming of the Bank and the Tower, the firing the different barracks, the overthrow of everybody and everything, even the great and massive bridges which cross the Thames, and which were to be blown up as a matter of course; but the traitors were pious and brave men, relying almost wholly on Providence and their courage, so that only two hundred and fifty pikes and some powder in an old stocking had been provided to secure the success of their undertaking.

XII.

Many schemes equally plausible were attributed to, and perhaps entertained by, a few unhappy men in the manufacturing districts; while the well-known doctrines of an enthusiast named Spence*—doctrines which inculcate the necessity of property being held in common, and which under different names have been continually put forward at every period of the world—found amongst the poor and starving, as they will ever find in times of distress and difficulty, a ready reception. "These doctrines," said Lord Castlereagh, "contain in themselves a principle of contradiction;" but he was not willing to trust to this principle alone!

Various laws were passed, tending to limit the right of discussion: men were forbidden to co-operate or correspond for the purpose of amending the existing constitution. Public meetings were placed at the disposal of a magis-

* Spence preached about the period of the French Revolution, and his doctrines were revived now by his follower, Evans.

trate, who could prevent or disperse them as he thought proper. Finally, the "Habeas Corpus" Act was suspended.

Nothing could be more wanton or absurd than this last outrage on public freedom. The Ministers who were calling upon the country to defend our institutions, were for sweeping away their very foundations. In vain did Lord Grey, with even more than his usual eloquence, exclaim, "We are warned not to let any anxiety for the security of liberty lead to a compromise of the security of the State; for my part, I cannot separate these two things; the safety of the State can only be found in the protection of the liberties of the people."

Having entered upon a career of terror, a new violence is daily necessary in order to guard against the consequences of the last; nor was the addition of 3,000,000*l.* of taxes, imposed at the close of 1819, well adapted to soothe popular irritation. In the meantime the meeting at Manchester, foolishly got up, and foolishly and barbarously put down, aroused a cry which only the utmost severity could hope to quell. Such severity was adopted in the Acts which prevented public and parish meetings; which punished offences of the press with transportation; which exposed the houses of peaceable inhabitants to midnight search, and deprived an Englishman of what was once considered his birthright—the right of keeping arms for his own defence. At the same time the bulk of the nation was declared to be sound and loyal, the country prosperous; and as a note which may perhaps be considered somewhat explanatory of these different declarations, came a demand for 10,000 additional troops. It was of no use to argue that the nation was quiet, and resolved only on constitutional means of redress. "Yes, sir," said the figurative seconder of the Address (1819)—"yes, sir, there has undoubtedly been an appearance of tranquillity, but it *is the tranquillity of a lion waiting for his prey.* There has been the apparent absence of danger, but it is that of a fire half-smothered by the weight of its own combustible materials." "The meeting at Manchester," argued Lord Lansdowne (Nov. 30, 1819), "if it had not

been disturbed by the magistrates, would have gone off quietly." "Perhaps," replied an orator who defended the Government, "that might have been the case; but why? in the contemplation of things to come, the peaceable and quiet demeanour of the disaffected, instead of lessening the danger, ought to aggravate the alarm—*ipsa silentia terrent.*"

XIII.

So because people assembled at a meeting which was likely to disperse peaceably might at some future time (and this was conjecture) act less peaceably, they were to be charged and sabred; while their constitutional conduct neither at this nor at any other period could be of the least avail; heat of language was not even necessary to procure them the treatment of rebels; for if men met and were *silent*, if they met and never uttered a word, their very silence, under the classical authority of three Latin words, was to be considered full of awful treason. Jury after jury denounced the conduct of the Government by returning verdicts which were accusations against it. Still the same system was persevered in. Ministers went through the country with a drag net, hauling up—not one or two influential persons (such, indeed, they could not find)—but whole classes of men. Spies also, as it appeared from the different trials, acted as incendiaries, contributing in no small degree to the marvellous plots that they discovered. In one instance, a fellow of the name of Oliver had gone about to all whom he imagined ill disposed, presenting Sir Francis Burdett's compliments; a circumstance the more remarkable, since the only decent colour ever attempted to be given to these notions of insurrection was, that the names of respectable persons had been used in connection with them. In another case a government creature, by the name of Edwards, actually advanced money to a gentleman who may be considered the arch-traitor of the epoch, since he was the author of that famous conspiracy which included in its programme cutting off all the ministers' heads.

This conspiracy—of which Mr. Thistlewood, supported by the aforesaid Mr. Edwards, Mr. Davidson, a man of

colour, and Messrs. Tidd and Brunt, two shoemakers, were the leaders—closed the series of those formidable plots for putting an end to King, Lords, and Commons, which for three years disturbed the country; the Ministers affecting to consider that the wisdom of the policy they pursued was proved by the folly of those wretched men whom they delivered to the executioner.

Another circumstance is to be remarked in reviewing these times, and attempting to portray their spirit. The Government had not only been tyrannical at home, it had afforded all the assistance in its power to foreign tyrants. First was passed the Alien Bill; a measure which might have been defended in 1793, when France was sending out her revolutionary apostles; which might, with a certain plausibility, have been asked for in 1814, when, if the war were concluded, peace could hardly be considered as established; but which in 1816 could have no other pretext than that of enabling the minister of the day to refuse a refuge to any unhappy exile from the despotism of the Continent.

Shortly afterwards (1819) came the Foreign Enlistment Bill. That which Queen Elizabeth refused to Spain when Spain was in the height of her power, was conceded to Spain, now fallen into the lowest state of moral as well as political degradation. It was true that during the Administration of Sir Robert Walpole, and under the natural fears of Jacobite armies, formed on foreign shores, laws had been passed prohibiting British subjects, except upon special permission, from engaging in foreign service; and the pretext now put forward was insomuch plausible, that it pretended to place service in the armies of recognised and unrecognised states on the same footing—no law existing in respect to the last. But the law in existence had not been enforced. Spain, which had been hasty in recognising the independence of the United States, could not ask us to defeat rebellion in her own colonies. Those colonies had, in fact, been first instigated by us to revolt. The regulation, professing to be impartial, would only operate in reality against one of the parties; and with that party all our commercial interests were connected.

XIV.

It is impossible to look back to these years, and to consider the conduct of Mr. Canning without deep regret. The most eloquent and plausible defences of the un-English policy which prevailed were made by him. In his speech in favour of the Seditious Meetings Bill (Feb. 24, 1817), may be seen wit supplying the place of argument; argument rendered attractive by the graces of rhetoric, and forcible by the appearance of passion. He had now, indeed, nearly attained the perfection of his own style, a style which, as it has been said, united the three excellences of—rapidity, polish, and ornament; and it was the first of these qualities, let it be repeated, which, though perhaps the least perceivable of his merits, was the greatest.

"What is the nature of this danger? Why, sir, the danger to be apprehended is not to be defined in one word. It is rebellion; it is treason, but not treason merely; it is confiscation, but not confiscation within such bounds as have usually been applied to the changes of dynasties, or the revolution of states; it is an aggregate of all these evils; it is that dreadful variety of sorrow and suffering which must invariably follow the extinction of loyalty, morality, and religion; the subversion, not only of the constitution of England, but of the whole frame of society. Such is the nature and extent of the danger which would attend the success of the projects developed in the report of the committee. But these projects would never have been of importance, it is affirmed, had they not been brought into notice by persecution. Persecution! Does this character belong to the proceedings instituted against those who set out on their career in opposition to all law; and who, in their secret cabals, and midnight counsels, and mid-day harangues, have been voting for destruction every individual, and every class of individuals, which may stand in their way? But the schemes of these persons are visionary. I admit it. They have been laid by these twenty years without being found to produce mischief. Be it so. Such doctrines when dormant may be harmless

enough, and their intrinsic absurdity may make it appear incredible that they should ever be called up into action. But when the incredible resurrection actually takes place, when the votaries of these doctrines actually go forth armed to exert physical strength in furtherance of them, then it is that I think it time to be on my guard—not against the accomplishment of such plans (that is, I am willing to believe, impracticable), but against the mischief which must attend the attempt to accomplish them by force."

Throughout the whole of this passage it can hardly be said that there is a full stop. However studiously framed, not a period lingers; a rush of sentences gives the audience no time to pause. Abruptly framed, rapidly delivered, the phrases which may have been for hours premeditated in the Cabinet, could not, in the moment of delivery, have the least appearance of art. The oratory of Mr. Canning was also remarkable for a kind of figurative way of stating common-places, which good taste may not approve, but which, nevertheless, is well calculated to strike and inflame a popular assembly.

"The honourable gentleman," Mr. Canning says of Mr. Calcraft (March 14, 1817), "attempts to ridicule these proceedings. He is in truth rather hard to be satisfied on the score of rebellion; to him it is not sufficient that the town had been summoned [N.B. it had been summoned by *one* man], it ought to have been taken; the metropolis should not merely have been attacked, but in flames. He is so difficult in regard to proof that he would continue to doubt until all the mischief was not only certain but irreparable. For my part, however, I am satisfied when I hear the trumpet of rebellion sounded; I do not think it necessary to wait the actual onset before I put myself on my guard. I am content to take my precautions when I see the torch of the incendiary lighted, without waiting till the Bank and the Mansion House are blazing to the sky."

XV.

But if there was much of eloquence, there was more of sophistry, in these pointed and painted harangues. The

designs on foot were represented as so formidable that they required the utmost rigour to suppress them; and yet they were the designs of a few, of a very few, against whom millions were arrayed. These few were to be struck down at all hazards and by all means, in order that the millions might be in security. The anti-revolutionary statesman was simply borrowing from the revolutionary apostle. "What are a few aristocrats," would Danton say, "to the safety of a nation? Strike! strike! It is only terror that can save the Republic!" For such principles, destructive of all liberty, peace, and order, every just man must entertain the deepest horror; and the dark shadow of those days still hangs over the party to whose excesses they are attributable, and obscures this part of the career of the statesman who defended them.

I do not, however, think that Mr. Canning acted on the cool systematic calculation by which I do think Lord Castlereagh might have been guided. Looking at all affairs with the excitable disposition of the poet and the orator, and having his attention more called by his office to the affairs of India than to those at home, it is not improbable that he allowed himself to be carried into the belief of dangers which the Government he belonged to had in a certain degree created, and in an enormous degree exaggerated; whilst the manner in which even calm and sensible men had their heads confused and their judgment biassed by the alarming reports put in circulation, and the constant arrests that were taking place, reacted upon the Government itself, and made it fancy that the fictions reflected from its fear were truths established by facts. At all events, whatever were the real opinions and convictions of Mr. Canning, as he was the most eloquent supporter of the policy in vogue, he gathered round himself the greatest portion of the unpopularity that attended it. Nor, though he assumed the air of defying this unpopularity, was he pleased with it.

XVI.

The very bitterness, indeed, which he manifested towards his opponents at this time, shows that he was ill at ease with himself. Linked with a set of men whom in general he despised, and by whom he was in a certain degree mistrusted, and accused, as he well knew, of accepting this alliance merely for the love of "office," which the vulgar made to signify the mere "emoluments of place;" —possessing a mind, which, elevated by education, was inclined to liberality; careless of the praise of the fanatics of his own party, and careless also of the applause of those timorous spirits amongst the nation with whom he could feel no sympathy;—knowing he was detested by the great masses of the people, whose applause he could not with his temperament refrain from coveting;—knowing also that though supported by the love and admiration of a few able friends, he was confided in by no great political party, and that even if his duties imposed on him the necessity of struggling against existing difficulties, those difficulties might have been avoided or palliated by a more conciliatory and prudent policy; writhing under all these circumstances and agitated by all these feelings,—this able, ambitious, and excitable man may now be seen listening with ears almost greedy of a quarrel, for reproaches he could retort, and insults he could avenge. Mr. Hume, not very cautious in these matters, was called to account: Sir Francis Burdett, who had spoken disrespectfully, was made to explain; while to the author of an anonymous libel, in which the style and invectives of "Junius" were copied with doubtful success, was sent a note, eminently characteristic of the galled feelings and gallant spirit of the writer:

"Sir,

"I received early in the last week the copy of your pamphlet, which you, I take for granted, had the attention to have forwarded to me. Soon after I was informed, on the authority of your publisher, that you have withdrawn the whole impression from him, with the

view (as was supposed) of suppressing the publication. I since learn, however, that the pamphlet, though not sold, is circulated under blank covers. I learn this from (among others) the gentleman to whom the pamphlet is industriously attributed, but who has voluntarily and absolutely denied to me that he has any knowledge of it or its author.

"To you, sir, whoever you may be, I address myself thus directly for the purpose of expressing my opinion that *you are a liar and a slanderer, and want courage only to be an assassin.* I have only to add that no man knows of my writing to you, and that I shall maintain the same reserve as long as I have an expectation of hearing from you in your own name." To this letter there was no reply.

XVII.

During the eventful years over which this narrative has been rapidly gliding, the Heiress to the crown, who who had already possessed herself of the affections of the British people, had expired (it was in Nov. 1817); and in 1820, as the Ministers, fatigued by their laborious efforts to excite alarm, began to allow the nation to recover its tranquillity, George III. (two years after his young and blooming grandchild) died also. The new King's hatred, and Queen Caroline's temper, rendering a more decent and moderate course impossible, occasioned the unhappy trial which scandalized Europe.

Nor was the question at issue merely a question involving the Queen's innocence or guilt. The people, comparatively calm, as well on account of the recent improvement in trade, as in consequence of the cessation of that system of conspiracy-making or finding, which had so long kept them in a state of harassed irritation, were still for the main part thoroughly disgusted with the exhibition of fear, feebleness, and violence which, under the name of Lord Liverpool, and through the influence of Lord Castlereagh, had for the last three years been displayed. They detested the ministers of the Crown, and they were alienated from the Crown itself, which had been

perpetually arrayed against them in prosecutions and almost as often stigmatised by defeat.

It was thus that Queen Caroline appeared as a new victim—as another person to be illegally assailed by the forms of law, and unjustly dealt with in the name of justice. Besides, she was a woman, and the daughter of a Royal house, and the mother of that ill-fated princess, whose early death the nation still deeply mourned. The people, then, took up her cause as their own, and rallied at once round a new banner against their old enemies.

On the other hand, the Government, urged by the wounded pride and uncontrollable anger of the Sovereign, consented to bring the unfortunate lady he denounced before a public tribunal, and were thus committed to a desperate career, of which it was impossible to predict the result.

Mr. Canning had long been the unhappy Queen's intimate friend; but in adopting her cause, he must, as we have been showing, have adopted her party—the party of discontent, the party of reform—a party against which he had, during the last few years, been fiercely struggling. Here, as far as the public can judge from the information before it, lies the only excuse or explanation of his conduct; for it was hardly sufficient to retire (as he did) from any share in the proceedings against a friend and a woman, in whose innocence he said that he believed, when her honour and life were assailed by the most powerful adversaries, and by charges of the most degrading character.

He refused, it is true, to be her active accuser; but neither was he her active defender. He remained silent at home or stayed abroad during the time of the prosecution, and resigned office when, that prosecution being dropped, the Cabinet had to justify its proceedings.

The following letter to a constituent contains the account he thought it necessary to give of his conduct:

"Tuddenham, Norfolk, Dec. 22, 1820.

"My dear Sir,

"I left town on Wednesday, a few minutes after I had written to you, not thinking I should be quite so

soon set at liberty to make you the communication promised in my letter of that morning. I had hitherto forborne to make the communication, in order that I might not in any way embarrass others by a premature disclosure; and I sincerely expected in return due notice of the time when it might suit them that the disclosure should be made. I have no doubt that the omission of such notice has been a mere oversight. I regret it only as it has prevented me from anticipating with you, and the rest of my friends at Liverpool, the announcement in a newspaper of an event in which I know your kind partiality will induce you to feel a lively interest. The facts stated in the *Courier* of Wednesday evening, are stated in substance correctly. I have resigned my office. My motive for separating myself from the Government (however reluctantly at a conjuncture like the present) is to be found solely in the proceedings and pending discussions respecting the Queen. There is (as the *Courier* justly assumes) but this one point of difference between my colleagues and myself. Those who may have done me the honour to observe my conduct in this unhappy affair from the beginning, will recollect that on the first occasion on which it was brought forward in the House of Commons, I declared my determination to take as little part as possible in any subsequent stage of the proceedings. The declaration was made advisedly. It was made, not only after full communication with my colleagues, but as an alternative suggested on their part for my then retirement from the Administration. So long as there was a hope of amicable adjustment, my continuance in the Administration might possibly be advantageous; that hope was finally extinguished by the failure of Mr. Wilberforce's address. On the same day on which the Queen's answer to that address was received by the House of Commons, I asked an audience of the King, and at that audience (which I obtained the following day) after respectfully repeating to his Majesty the declaration which I had made a fortnight before in the House of Commons, and stating the impossibility of my departing from it, I felt it my duty humbly to lay at his Majesty's

feet the tender of my resignation. The King, with a generosity which I can never sufficiently acknowledge, commanded me to remain in his service, abstaining as completely as I might think fit from any share in the proceedings respecting the Queen, and gave me full authority to plead his Majesty's express command for so continuing in office. No occasion subsequently occurred in Parliament (at least no adequate occasion) for availing myself of the use of this authority, and I should have thought myself inexcusable in seeking an occasion for the purpose; but from the moment of my receiving his Majesty's gracious commands, I abstained entirely from all interference on the subject of the Queen's affairs. I did not attend any meetings of the Cabinet upon that subject; I had no share whatever in preparing or approving the Bill of Pains and Penalties. I was (as you know) absent from England during the whole progress of the bill, and returned only after it had been withdrawn.

"The new state in which I found the proceedings upon my return to England, required the most serious consideration; it was one to which I could not conceive the King's command in June to be applicable. For a minister to absent himself altogether from the expected discussions in the House of Commons, intermixed as they were likely to be with the general business of the session, appeared to me to be quite impossible. To be present as a minister, taking no part in these discussions, could only be productive of embarrassment to myself, and of perplexity to my colleagues; to take any part in them was now, as always, out of the question.

"From these difficulties I saw no remedy except in the humble but earnest renewal to my Sovereign of the tender of my resignation, which has been as graciously accepted, as it was in the former instance indulgently declined.

"If some weeks have elapsed since my return to England, before I could arrive at this practical result, the interval has been chiefly employed in reconciling, or endeavouring to reconcile, my colleagues to a step taken by me in a spirit of the most perfect amity, and tending (in my judgment) as much to their relief as to my own.

"It remains for me only to add that having purchased, by the surrender of my office, the liberty of continuing to act in consistency with my original declaration, it is now my intention (but an intention perfectly gratuitous, and one which I hold myself completely free to vary, if I shall at any time see occasion for so doing) to be absent from England again until the agitation of this calamitous affair shall be at an end.

"I am, Sir, &c.,
"GEORGE CANNING."

Thus in the years 1821-22, Mr. Canning took little part in the business of the House of Commons, residing occasionally near Bordeaux or in Paris.

He came to England, however, to speak on Mr. Plunkett's motion for a committee to consider the Catholic claims (February 28, 1821), and in 1822 also he made two memorable speeches—one on Lord John Russell's motion for Parliamentary Reform, and another in support of his own proposition to admit Catholic peers into the House of Lords.

These last speeches were made in the expectancy of his speedy departure from England; the Directors of the East India Company, in testimony of their appreciation of the zeal and intelligence with which he had discharged his duties as President of the Board of Control, having selected him as Governor-General of India, a situation which he had accepted.

Part III.

FROM DEATH OF LORD LONDONDERRY TO PORTUGUESE EXPEDITION.

Lord Castlereagh's death.—Mr. Canning's appointment as Foreign Secretary. —State of affairs.—Opposition he encountered.—Policy as to Spain and South America.—Commencing popularity in the country, and in the House of Commens.—Affairs of Portugal and Brazil.—Recognition of Brazilian empire.—Constitution taken by Sir Charles Stuart to Portugal.—Defence of Portugal against Spanish treachery and aggression.—Review of policy pursued thus far as a whole.

I.

At this critical moment Lord Castlereagh, who had now succeeded to the title of Lord Londonderry, worn out by a long-continued series of struggles with the popular passions —placed in a false position by the manner in which the great military powers had at Troppau and Laybach announced principles which no English statesman could ever sanction,—too high-spirited to endure defeat, and without the ability requisite for forming and carrying on any policy that might be triumphant,—irritated, overworked, and about to depart for Verona with the intention of remonstrating against acts which he had been unable to prevent,—having lost all that calm and firmness with which his proud but cheerful nature was generally armed, —and overpowered at last by an infamous conspiracy to extort money, with the threat that he should otherwise be charged with a disgraceful and dishonouring offence—put an end to his existence.

Fate looked darkly on the Tory party. Ever since 1817, it had excited one half of the community by fear, as a means of governing the other half by force. But the machinery of this system was now pretty well used up. Moreover the result of Queen Caroline's trial was a staggering blow to those who had been its advisers; and

though this unhappy and foolish lady did all she could to destroy the prestige which had once surrounded her—and it was only unexpected decease that rescued her from approaching contempt—even her death gave the authorities a new opportunity of injuring themselves by an idle and offensive conflict with her hearse.

Meanwhile the affairs in the Peninsula were becoming more and more obscured, whilst through the clouds which seemed everywhere gathering, some thought they could perceive the fatal hour in which a terrible despotism and an ignorant and equally terrible democracy were to dispute for the mastery of the world. In France the Bourbons trembled on their throne, and petty cabals and paltry conflicts amongst themselves rendered their rule at once violent, feeble, and uncertain. The volcanic soil of Italy was covered with ashes from a recent conflagration—some embers might yet be seen alive. Over the whole of Germany reigned a dreamy discontent which any accident might convert into a practical revolution.

II.

What part could the baffled and unpopular Ministers of England take amidst such a state of things as I have been describing? To the advocacy of democratic principles they were of course opposed. With the advocates of absolute power they dared not, and perhaps did not feel disposed to, side. Neutrality was their natural wish, since to be neutral required no effort and demanded no declaration of opinion. But it is only the strong who can be really neutral; and the Government of the day was too conscious of weakness to hold with confidence the position which, if powerful, it could have preserved with dignity. Such being the miserable condition of the British cabinet when Lord Londonderry was alive, it became yet more contemptible on losing that statesman's energy and resolution. Mr. Canning was its evident resource. Yet the wish to obtain Mr. Canning's services was by no means general amongst those in power, for the ministry was divided into two sections: one, hostile to Catholic Emancipation, to any change in, and almost any modification of,

our long-standing system of high duties and commercial protection, and hostile also to all those efforts in favour of constitutional liberty which had lately agitated the Continent; the other, which, though opposed to any constitutional change that tended to increase the democratic element in our institutions, was still favourable to Catholic Emancipation as a means of conciliating the large majority of the Irish people—to the development of the principles of Free Trade, as a means of augmenting our national wealth—and to the spread of our political opinions, under the idea that we should thus be extending our commercial, moral, and political power.

These two parties, forced to combine under the common battle-cry of "no parliamentary reform,"—a reform which both opposed (in order to get a parliamentary majority for their united force)—were nevertheless jealous of each other, and in constant struggle for the predominant influence. Mr. Canning out of office, and away in India, there could be no doubt that the more Conservative section of the Administration would occupy the highest ground; Mr. Canning not going to India, and coming into office, the more liberal party, of which he was universally considered the chief, might overtop its rival. Lord Liverpool, however, was himself in a peculiar position. He agreed with Mr. Canning's opponents as to the Catholic Emancipation question, but with Mr. Canning on all other questions. His policy, therefore, was to rule a pretty equally balanced cabinet, and not to have one half too strong for the other. With this object he had lately given office to two or three followers of Lord Grenville, who, though himself retired from affairs, had still a party favourable to Catholic Emancipation, and hostile to constitutional innovations. For the same reason he now insisted on the necessity of offering the Secretaryship of Foreign Affairs to Mr. Canning, and impressed his opinions on this subject so strongly on the Duke of Wellington, that his Grace, though he had some prejudices of his own to conquer, undertook to vanquish those of his Majesty, against Mr. Canning's appointment. A lady who was an intimate friend of George IV., and at that moment of the

Duke also, and who was then staying at Brighton, told me that the Duke went down to Brighton, and held an interview with the King, and she related to me parts of a conversation which, according to her, took place on this occasion.

"Good God! Arthur, you don't mean to propose that fellow to me as Secretary for Foreign Affairs; it is impossible! I said, on my honour as a gentleman, he should never be one of my ministers again. You hear, Arthur, on my honour as a gentleman. I am sure you will agree with me, that I can't do what I said on my honour as a gentleman I would not do."

"Pardon me, Sire, I don't agree with you at all; your Majesty is not a gentleman."

The King started.

"Your Majesty, I say," continued the imperturbable soldier, "is not a gentleman, but the Sovereign of England, with duties to your people far above any to yourself; and these duties render it imperative that you should at this time employ the abilities of Mr. Canning."

"Well!" drawing a long breath, "if I must, I must," was finally the King's reply.*

III.

Mr. Canning thus entered the Cabinet; and under ordinary circumstances his doing so at such a crisis would have been hailed with general satisfaction. It so happened, however, that some time had elapsed between the death of Lord Castlereagh and any offer to his successor; and

* The accuracy of this story having been disputed, I asked Lady Palmerston, who was living in the same set as the lady in question, and also about this period residing at Brighton, whether she remembered hearing anything corroborating my information, and she said she perfectly well remembered hearing the anecdote I have narrated. But there is nothing in the Duke of Wellington's letters to confirm it, and, like most tales of a similar nature, it probably had some foundation, but was not precisely correct either in details or dates.

The main fact, however, remains untouched, and is indeed proved by the Wellington correspondence, viz., that Lord Liverpool applied to the Duke of Wellington to obtain the King's consent to Mr. Canning's appointment, and that the Duke succeeded, though not without difficulty.

during this interval, Mr. Canning, then on the verge of departure for the East, made a speech at Liverpool, which, from its remarkable moderation, was considered by many as the manifestation of a wish to purchase place by a sacrifice of opinion. The words most objected to were these:

"Gentlemen, if I were remaining in this country, and continuing to take my part in Parliament, I should continue, in respect to the Catholic Question, to walk in the same direction that I have hitherto done. But I think (and as I may not elsewhere have an opportunity of expressing this opinion, I am desirous of expressing it here)—I think that after the experience of a fruitless struggle for more than ten years, I should, as an individual (speaking for none but myself, and not knowing whether I carry any other person's opinion with me) be induced henceforth, or perhaps after one more general trial, to seek upon that question a *liberal compromise*." Thus, when instead of going to India the Governor-General, already named, came into office at home, it was said at once that he had done so on a *compromise*.

The accusation was false, but there was some appearance of its being true, and those amongst the Opposition who believed it, were the more enraged, since they thought that if the Ministry had not been strengthened by the new Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, it could not have sustained itself, in which case they themselves would have been called to power.

The speeches made against Mr. Canning were consequently of the bitterest kind. One, by Lord Folkestone, on a motion for the repeal of the Foreign Enlistment Bill, delivered with extraordinary vehemence, accused him of truckling to France.

"Sir," said Mr. Canning, in reply, "I will not follow the noble lord through a speech of which it would be impossible to convey the impression by a mere repetition of language. The Lacedæmonians, with the desire of deterring their children from the vice of intoxication, used occasionally to expose their slaves in a state of disgusting inebriety. But, sir, there is a moral as well as a physical

intoxication; and never before did I behold so complete a personification of the character which I have somewhere seen described as *exhibiting the contortions of the sibyl without her inspiration.* I will not on this occasion reply to the noble lord's speech, being of opinion that this is not a fit opportunity for entering into the discussion it would provoke; but let it not be supposed that I shrink from the noble lord; for he may believe me when I say that however I may have truckled to France, I will never truckle to him."

IV.

This speech was delivered April 16, 1823. On the 17th another important discussion occurred in Parliament. Mr. Plunkett, who had joined the Administration with Mr. Canning, bringing forward on that day the claims of the Catholics, as a sort of token that he and those who thought with him had not, on taking office, abandoned the question of which they had so long been the most eminent supporters,—Sir Francis Burdett accused both the Attorney-General for Ireland and the Secretary for Foreign Affairs of seeking to make an idle parade of fine sentiments, which they knew would be practically useless. Mr. Canning defended himself, and, as he sat down, Mr. Brougham rose:

"If," said he, "the other ministers had taken example by the single-hearted, plain, manly, and upright conduct of the right honourable Secretary for the Home Department (Mr. Peel), who has always been on the same side on this question, never swerving from his opinions, but standing uniformly up and stating them—who had never taken office on a secret understanding to abandon the question in substance while he contrived to sustain it in words—whose mouth, heart, and conduct have always been in unison; if such had been the conduct of all the friends of emancipation, I should not have found myself in a state of despair with regard to the Catholic claims. Let the conduct of the Attorney-General for Ireland (Mr. Plunkett) have been what it might—let him have deviated from his former professions or not—still, if the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had only come forward at this

critical moment, when the point was whether he should go to India into honourable exile, or take office in England and not submit to his sentence of transportation, but be condemned to hard labour in his own country—doomed to the disquiet of a divided council, sitting with his enemies, and pitied by his friends, with his hands chained and tied down on all those lines of operation which his own sentiments and wishes would have led him to adopt—if, at that critical moment, when his fate depended on Lord Chancellor Eldon, and on his sentiments with respect to the Catholic cause—if, at that critical moment, he who said the other night that he would not truckle to a noble lord, but who then exhibited the most incredible specimen of monstrous truckling for the purpose of obtaining office that the whole history of political tergiversation could furnish. . . ."

At these words, Mr. Canning, labouring to conceal emotion which his countenance had long betrayed, started up, and, in a calm voice, with his eye fixed on Mr. Brougham, said, "Sir, I rise to say that that is false." A dead silence of some minutes ensued; the Speaker interfered; neither party would retract, and both gentlemen were ordered into custody; but at last the matter was arranged through Sir R. Wilson's mediation.

V.

Without going into many details, I have thus said enough to show that Mr. Canning had, in his new post, to contend—first, against the disfavour of the Crown; secondly, against the dislike, jealousy, and suspicion of a large portion of his colleagues; thirdly, against the bitterest hostility of the most able and eloquent amongst his parliamentary opponents.

It is necessary to take into consideration all these difficulties in order to appreciate the rare abilities, the adroit adaptation of means to ends, the clever profiting by times and occasions, the bold bearing-up against powerful antagonists, the conquest over personal antipathies, which in a few years placed England—humbled to the lowest degree when Lord Castlereagh expired—in the highest position

she ever occupied since the days of Lord Chatham; and, at the same time, ended by making the most unpopular man with the nation, and the most distasteful minister to the Sovereign, the people's idol and the monarch's favourite.

I have asserted that England was never in a more humbled position than at the death of Lord Castlereagh. I had myself the opportunity of seeing this illustrated in a private and confidential correspondence between Prince Metternich and a distinguished person with whom he was on terms of great intimacy, and to whom he wrote without reserve;—a correspondence in which the Prince, when alluding to our great warrior, who represented England at the Congress of Verona, spoke of him as "the great Baby," and alluded to the power and influence of England as things past and gone.

It was, in fact, too true that all memory of the long efforts of twenty years, eventually successful in liberating Europe, had wholly lapsed from the minds of those military potentates, who having during war experienced every variety of defeat, appeared at the conclusion of peace to have recovered unbounded confidence in their arms.

The institutions which had nourished the pride and valour to which we had owed our victories, were daily denounced by the sovereigns in whose cause we had fought; and every new expression of opinion that came to us from the Continent, manifested more and more that Waterloo was forgotten by every nation but the French. Nothing, in short, was wanting to complete our degradation after the false and impudent conduct of M. de Villèle, but its disrespectful avowal; and painful and humiliating must have been the sentiments of an English statesman, when he read the speech of the French minister in the Chamber of Deputies, and found him boast of having amused our Government by misrepresenting the force on the Spanish frontier as merely a *cordon sanitaire*, until it was made to act as *army of invasion*.

VI.

The ground, however, which the sovereigns forming the Holy Alliance had now chosen for fighting the battle of principles, was not well selected by them for the conflict.

During the despotism of Ferdinand, it was never forgotten in this country, that those with whom he filled his prisons, those whose blood he shed, those of whose hopeless exile he was the cause, had fought side by side with our own gallant soldiers; were the zealous and valiant patriots who had delivered the land from which they were driven, and re-established the dynasty which their tyrant disgraced. Many, then, who disapproved of the new Spanish constitution, were disposed to excuse the excesses of freedom as the almost natural reaction from the abuses of absolute power.

Nor was this all. There has always been a strong party in England justly in favour of a good understanding with the French nation. On such an understanding is based that policy of peace which Walpole and Fox judiciously advocated—the first more fortunately and more opportunely than the last. But as no policy should ever be carried to the extreme, we have on the other hand to consider that the only serious danger menacing to England is the undue aggrandisement of France. Her proximity, her warlike spirit, her constant thirst for glory and territory, the great military and naval armaments at her disposal, the supremacy amongst nations which she is in the habit of affecting, are all, at certain times, threatening to our interests and wounding to our pride; and when the French nation, with the tendency which she has always manifested to spread her opinions, professes exaggerated doctrines, whether in favour of democracy or despotism, the spirit of conquest and proselytism combined with power makes her equally menacing to our institutions and to our independence. Her predominance in Spain, moreover, which unites so many ports to those of France—ports in which, as we learnt from Napoleon I., armaments can be fitted out, and from which expeditions can be sent against our possessions in the Mediterranean, or our

empire in the Channel, or against Egypt, on the high road to our Indian dominions, has always been regarded by English statesmen with a rational disquietude, and on various occasions resisted with boldness, perseverance, and success; nor did it matter to us whether it was the white flag or the tricolour which crossed the Bidassoa when either was to be considered the symbol of ambition and injustice.

VII.

Thus, Spain became, not inauspiciously, the spot on which a liberal English minister had to confront the despotic governments of the Continent. But for war on account of Spain, England was not prepared; and, indeed, the treachery which we knew existed in the Spanish counsels, rendered war on account of that divided country out of the question. The only remaining means of opposition was protestation, and Mr. Canning at once protested against the act of aggression which France was committing, and against the principles put forth in its justification. The mode of doing this was rendered easy by the speech from the French throne, which was inexplicable, except as a bold assertion of the divine rights of kings; and for that slavish doctrine Mr. Canning, who, whichever side he took, was not very guarded in his expressions, roundly stated that "he felt disgust and abhorrence."

The gauntlet of Legitimacy having been thus thrown down, and being in this manner taken up, it only remained to conduct the contest.

Caution was necessary in the selection of an opportunity where a stand should be made. Boldness was also necessary in order to make that stand without fear or hesitation, when the fitting occasion arrived.

France, therefore, was permitted to overrun the Spanish territory without resistance. But Mr. Canning declared that, whilst England adopted, thus far, a passive attitude, she could not permit the permanent occupation of Spain, or any act of aggression against Portugal. At the same time he alluded to the recognition of the revolted provinces in South America, which provinces France was expecting

to gain in compensation for her expenses, as an event merely dependent upon time, and protested against any seizure by France, or any cession by Spain of possessions which had *in fact* established their independence. In these expressions were shadowed out the whole of that course subsequently developed. They were little noticed, it is true, at the time, because they did not interfere with the plan of the moment, viz., the destruction of a constitutional government at Madrid; but they became a text to which our Minister could subsequently refer as a proof of the frankness and consistency of the policy that from the commencement of the French campaign he had been pursuing. No one, however, understood better than the statesman who had resolved on this policy, that to be powerful abroad you must be popular at home. Thus at the close of the session in which he had denounced the absolute doctrines of the French Legitimists, we see him passing through the great mercantile and manufacturing towns, and endeavouring to excite amidst the large and intelligent masses of those towns an enthusiasm for his talents, and that attachment to his person, which genius, when it comes into contact with the people, rarely fails to inspire.

VIII.

On one of these occasions it was that he delivered the memorable speech, meant to resound throughout Europe, and spoken with exquisite propriety in sight of the docks at Plymouth.

"Our ultimate object, no doubt, is the peace of the world, but let it not be said that we cultivate it either because we fear, or because we are unprepared for war. On the contrary, if eight months ago the Government did not proclaim that this country was prepared for war, this was from causes far other than those produced by fear; and if war should at last unfortunately be necessary, every intervening month of peace that has since passed has but made us so much the more capable of warlike exertion. The resources created by peace are indeed the means of war. In cherishing these resources, we but accumulate these means. Our present repose is no more a proof of

incapability to act, than the state of inertness and inactivity in which I have seen those mighty masses that float on the waters above your town, is a proof that they are devoid of strength, and incapable of being fitted for action. *You well know, gentlemen, how soon one of those stupendous masses, now reposing on their shadows in perfect stillness—how soon upon any call of patriotism or of necessity, it would assume the likeness of an animated thing, instinct with life and motion; how soon it would ruffle, as it were, its swelling plumage; how quickly it would put forth all its beauty and its bravery; collect its scattered elements of strength, and awaken its dormant thunder! Such as is one of those magnificent machines when springing from inaction into a display of its might, such is England herself; while apparently passionless and motionless, she silently concentrates the power to be put forth on an adequate occasion.*"

Luckily for Mr. Canning, the circumstances of the country in 1824 enabled him to maintain and increase that popularity which he was desirous to acquire. Trade had begun to thrive, the revenue to increase, taxation to diminish; nor were these facts merely valuable in themselves, they were also valuable in affording a facility for entering more freely upon that large and comprehensive system of commerce which was the best adapted to a country that combined great maritime power with great manufacturing capacity.

Besides, by entering frankly upon this system, Mr. Canning was giving strength to one of those links which now began to unite him to the Opposition, and thus to rally round him by degrees nearly the whole liberal force of the House of Commons. Already, indeed, many of his opponents had softened in their tone, and Sir James Mackintosh (June 25, 1824), referring to papers that had been laid before Parliament, passed the highest eulogy on the conduct which the Foreign Secretary was adopting in respect to the South American question.

IX.

The time is now arrived for speaking of that question. From the first moment that the intentions of the French government towards Spain were known, Mr. Canning, as it has been seen, hinted at the recognition of the Spanish colonies, and protested against any proceeding which either directly or indirectly should bring them under the authority of France. A variety of projects,—amongst which that of holding a congress of the Great Powers at Paris, for the purpose of considering how it might be most expedient to assist Spain in adjusting her differences with the revolted colonies, was the most significant,—all tended to show the necessity of some immediate step for placing beyond dispute the condition of those colonies.

By a series of measures, each in advance of the preceding one, none going so far as to excite any burst of resentment, Mr. Canning went on gradually towards the ultimate decision he had in view.

A warning to Spain that unless she forthwith effected an accommodation with her former subjects, their independence would be recognised, was given and repeated; a warning to France that the cession to any other power of the Spanish possessions in America would not be allowed, had also been once given, and was now formally renewed. The project of interfering for their conquest with foreign troops, whatever might be decided by any congress, was boldly forbidden. Consuls had already been appointed to attend to the interests of British commerce in those parts, and commissioners had been sent out to Columbia and Mexico (the emancipation of Buenos Ayres was undisputed) to report on their condition. The memorable declaration of the United States, frequently referred to since—as the Munroe Doctrine,—and to which our foreign minister, by his communications with the United States Envoy in London, had in no small degree contributed;—a declaration to the effect that the United States would not see with indifference the attempt of any European power to establish itself on the American continent, was a positive assurance of the only alliance that might be important,

should England have to contend by force of arms against a French and Spanish expedition.

At last, strong in popularity at home, having by previous measures, difficult to be opposed, lessened the shock that might have been produced abroad, Mr. Canning put the seal to this portion of his plans, and announced his recognition of three of the most powerful of the new republics.

This recognition, however justifiable on its proper merits, is not merely to be considered on such isolated grounds. It formed a part, and an important part, of European policy; it altered the position in which this country stood towards those powers who had declared their principles to be in opposition to our own. Now it was the turn of Austria, Prussia, and Russia to *remonstrate*, and to have their *remonstrances* treated as those of England had been by them on former occasions. Thus, the part which Great Britain had hitherto played was for the first time reversed; and her character, which at each late congress had been sinking lower and lower in the scale of public opinion, rose at once in the balance. This is the first important epoch in Mr. Canning's foreign administration.

X.

The affairs of Portugal next demand attention. That country, from the commencement of the new conflict in the Peninsula, had been the scene of French intrigues for the purpose of destroying English interests; and of court cabals, with the object of favouring Don Miguel's pretensions. The Queen, a violent and profligate old woman, who had never kept any terms with her passions, countenanced the most desperate schemes; and King John VI., a weak but not unamiable monarch, was even obliged on one occasion to seek safety on board a British frigate. The defeat of the conspiracy which occasioned this alarm banished Don Miguel; but M. Subserra, the King's minister and favourite, and a mere tool in the hands of France, still remained; so that although the Portuguese government never took any open part against the Spanish Cortes, the King would never concede a constitution to his people (this being very strenuously opposed by the French Govern-

ment and its allies), nor unite himself cordially with England, by giving Lord Beresford the command of his army, and conferring on M. Palmella the chief influence in his cabinet. Our situation in respect to Portugal was moreover complicated by the state of Brazil. Don Pedro, King John's eldest son, had been left Regent in that colony by his father, when the latter returned to his more ancient dominions. The King's secret instructions were that the Prince should adopt any course that circumstances might render necessary, rather than allow so important a possession to pass from the family of Braganza. But the spirit of the Brazilians, who from the long residence of their monarch amongst them had for some time enjoyed the privileges of a Metropolitan State, would not submit to a renewal of their old dependence on the mother country; and the Regent was forced, in obedience to the injunctions just mentioned, to place himself at the head of a revolt, and to become, under the title of "Emperor," sovereign of a new kingdom.

It may be doubtful whether Don Pedro's father was quite pleased at an act of which (whatever might be his commands in the case of a supposed contingency) it might always have been difficult to prove the necessity by formal and unpalatable explanations; but the Portuguese in general were at all events far more violent than their monarch, and would at once have attempted the conquest of their rebellious but distant province if they had possessed any of the means requisite for such an undertaking. Mr. Canning, on the other hand, not only saw that Portugal, for her own sake, should endeavour to enter into some arrangement, admitting a fact which it was impossible to alter; he was also obliged, in consequence of the policy which he was elsewhere pursuing, to endeavour to obtain for Brazil an independent position.

It became desirable, then, on every account, to settle as soon as possible the differences between the colony and the mother country; and, having vainly attempted to do this in other ways, it was resolved at last, as the best and promptest course, to send some superior Diplomatist to Lisbon, who, if he succeeded in obtaining the consent of

the Portuguese government to a moderate plan of accommodation, might proceed at once to Rio Janeiro, and urge Don Pedro and his government to accept it. Sir Charles Stuart (afterwards Lord Stuart de Rothsay), was selected for the double mission, and succeeded, after some difficulty, in accomplishing its object. He then, however, being in Brazil, undertook the arrangement of a commercial treaty between the newly emancipated colony and Great Britain, and some singular errors into which he fell delaying the completion of his business, he was still at Rio when King John died.

XI.

The Emperor of Brazil, Don Pedro, then became King of Portugal; and having to decide on the relinquishment of one of these kingdoms, it seeming impossible to keep them permanently united, he assumed that, in abdicating the throne of Portugal, he had the right of dictating the method and terms of his abdication. He proposed, then, first, to take upon himself the crown to which he had succeeded; secondly, in his capacity of sovereign of Portugal, to give a constitution to the Portuguese; thirdly, if that constitution were accepted, and that Don Miguel, his brother, were willing to espouse Donna Maria, his (Don Pedro's) daughter, to place the ancient sceptre of Portugal in that daughter's hands.

The apparent countenance of Great Britain, however obtained, was no doubt of consequence to the success of this project, and Sir Charles Stuart was prevailed upon to accept the title of Portuguese ambassador, and in such capacity to be the bearer of the new constitutional charter to Portugal. He thus, it is true, acted without Mr. Canning's authority, for the case was one which could hardly have been foreseen, and it may be doubted whether his conduct was well advised; but still no experienced Diplomatist would have taken upon himself so important a part as Sir Charles Stuart assumed, unless he had pretty fair reasons to suppose that he was doing that which would be agreeable to his chief; and when Mr. Canning gave his subsequent sanction to Sir Charles's conduct, by de-

claring in a despatch, dated July 12, 1826, that the King entirely approved of the ambassador's having consented (under the peculiar circumstances of his situation in Brazil) to be the bearer of the Emperor's decrees to Lisbon, the world in general considered the whole affair, as in fact it had become, the arrangement of Great Britain.

In this manner did we appear as having recognised the South American Republics, as having arranged the separation and independence of the great Portuguese colony; and, finally, as having carried a constitution into Portugal itself. All the Powers leagued in favour of despotism, protesting at this time against the recognition of any colony, and France being then as their deputed missionary in Spain, for the express purpose of putting down a constitution in that country.

This is the second memorable epoch in Mr. Canning's foreign policy—the second period in that diplomatic war which at Troppau and Verona had been announced, and which when the Duc d'Angoulême crossed the Pyrenees, had been undertaken against Liberal opinions.

XII.

If our government at last stood in a position worthy of the strength and the intellect of the nation it represented, that position was, nevertheless, one that required for its maintenance the nicest tempering of dignity with forbearance; no offence was to be heedlessly given, none timidly submitted to. Spain and Portugal, long jealous and hostile, were marshalled under two hostile and jarring opinions. The most powerful, backed by friendly and kindred armies, was likely to invade the weaker; and that weaker we were bound to defend by an indissoluble alliance.

The first step manifesting the feelings of King Ferdinand's government was a refusal to recognise the Portuguese Regency established at King John's death; but matters were certain not to stop here. Portuguese deserters were soon received in Spain, and allowed to arm; nay, were furnished with arms by Spanish authority, for the purpose of being sent back as invaders into their native country. Even Spanish troops, in more than one instance,

hostilely entered Portugal, while the Spanish ministry scrupled at no falsehoods that might stretch a flimsy covering over their deceitful assurances and unfriendly designs.

Things were in this state, peace rested upon these hollow and uncertain foundations, when Mr. Canning received at the same time the official news that the rebel troops which had been organised in Spain were marching upon Lisbon; and the most solemn declarations from Spain herself that these very troops should be dispersed, and their chief arrested. The crisis for action seemed now to have arrived; for England was bound, as I have said, by treaty, to defend Portugal against a foreign power, and a foreign power was in this instance clearly, though meanly, indirectly, and treacherously assailing her. To shrink from the dangerous obligation to which we stood pledged, or even to appear so to shrink, was to relinquish that hold upon public opinion, both at home and abroad, which hold we had at last obtained, and to abandon the moral power which, if a contest did arise, would be the main portion of our strength. On the other hand, to comply with the request of the Portuguese government for succour (that request was now formally made), and to send a British force to Portugal was, no doubt, an event that might be the commencement of a general war. Of all policies, a hesitating, shuffling policy would have been the worst. Had it been adopted, Spain, or those who then governed Spain, would have proceeded to more violent and irremediable acts—acts to which we must have submitted with the grossest dishonour, or resented with the smallest chances of success.

XIII.

At this moment, 12th December, 1826, Mr. Canning came down to the House of Commons, his fine eye kindling with a sense of the magnitude of the transactions in which he was called upon to play so important a part; and having described the circumstances in which England was placed, and the obligations to which she was pledged, stated the manner in which the duty of the English government had been fulfilled:

"I understand, indeed, that in some quarters it has been imputed to his Majesty's ministers that an extraordinary delay intervened between the taking up the determination to give assistance to Portugal and the carrying of that determination into effect. But how stands the fact? On Sunday, the 3rd of this month, we received from the Portuguese ambassador a direct and formal demand of assistance against a hostile aggression from Spain. Our answer was, that although rumours had reached us through France of this event, his Majesty's government had not that accurate information—that official and precise intelligence of facts on which it could properly found an application to Parliament. It was only on last Friday night that this precise information arrived—on Saturday his Majesty's confidential servants came to a decision. On Sunday that decision received the sanction of his Majesty; on Monday it was communicated to both Houses of Parliament; and this day, sir, at this hour in which I have the honour of addressing you, the troops are on their march for embarkation."

This passage possesses all the qualities of oratory, and could hardly have been delivered without exciting a burst of applause. So again, when the Minister, his voice swelling, his arm outstretched, and his face turned towards the benches where sat the representatives of the great monarchs who, but a short time before, derided our power and denounced our principles, said, "We go to plant the standard of England on the *well-known heights* of Lisbon. Where that standard is planted, foreign dominion *shall not come*," a thrill ran through the assembly at these simple but ominous words. My conviction, indeed, was that this speech must throughout have produced as great an effect in delivery as it does, even now, in reading; but I was talking the other day with a friend who, then being a Westminster boy, was present at the debate; and he told me I was mistaken, and that with the exception of one or two passages such as those I have cited, there was a want of that elasticity and flow which distinguished Mr. Canning's happier efforts.

It is probable that not having had time, amidst the

business which the step he was taking had created, to prepare himself sufficiently, he had the air of being over-prepared. and, according to my friend, only rose to his full height as an orator, when he made that famous allusion to the position which England then held between conflicting principles, like Œolus between conflicting winds; and when again, in reply, defending the course he had adopted during the recent French expedition, he thus elevated his hearers to a conception of the grandeur of his views, and the mingled prudence and audacity of his conduct. "If France occupied Spain, was it necessary, in order to avoid the consequences of that occupation, that we should blockade Cadiz? No: I looked another way; I sought the materials of occupation in another hemisphere. Contemplating Spain such as her ancestors had known her, I resolved that, if France had Spain, it should not be Spain with the Indies; I called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the old."

XIV.

But the Minister of Foreign Affairs displayed talents far beyond those of the mere orator on this occasion. He took a step which was certain to incur the displeasure and excite the open hostility of a powerful party throughout Europe. Many who might have felt themselves obliged by honour to take this step would have done so with a timid and downcast air, endeavouring by an affectation of humanity to deprecate the anger of the high personages they were offending. Such men, exciting no sympathy, creating and maintaining no allies, encouraging the attacks and justifying the insults of all enemies, would have placed their country in a false and pitiful position, where, powerless and compromised, she would have stood before her opponents, exposed by her advance, tempting by her weakness. But the sagacious know that a bold game must be played boldly, and that the great art of moderating opponents consists in gaining friends.

Mr. Canning, then, neither flinched nor faltered. In venturing upon a measure which aroused the anger of so

many powerful foes, he made those foes aware that if we were assailed because, in fulfilment of treaties, we marched to the defence of a country which was attacked on account of its liberal institutions, England would gather beneath her standard all those who loved liberty throughout Europe. Our country was on the verge of a contest with the most potent sovereigns. Our minister neither provoked nor quailed before those sovereigns, but plainly told them, that if such a contest did arise, it would be a contest in which many of the governments eager to provoke it might expect to find, side by side with our soldiers, not a few of their own people—a contest in which, were Englishmen forced to take a part, they would not shrink from taking the part that befitted the brave and free descendants of men who had suffered for their religion at the stake, and adjudged their monarch to the scaffold.

XV.

British troops, then, were at last sent in aid of Portugal; no other troops opposed them; the expedition was successful; and from that moment Mr. Canning was pointed to as the first statesman of his time; and Great Britain—without having excited war or produced revolutions, following a course conformable to her interests, her history, and her character, backed by the sympathy of the free, and guarded by the reverence and affection of the intelligent; having shed no blood, having exhausted no treasure, having never uttered a word that our nation did not echo, nor shrunk from supporting a word that had been uttered—stood before the world in a yet more exalted and noble situation than even at that moment when Napoleon fled from Waterloo, and the British drum was beating in the streets of Paris.

This is the third epoch in Mr. Canning's conflict with the crusaders against constitutional principles. I have described the measures by which that conflict had been supported. It would be difficult to point out any stronger measures that a country, placed in similar circumstances, could have taken. But Mr. Canning, acting with force and spirit, had acted without exaggeration. He had not

said, "I will wage war with certain opinions;" he had not told the sovereigns of Troppau, Laybach, and Verona, "Because you commit aggression and injustice, I will do the same; because you enter into a war against Liberal governments, I will forthwith arm the people of my country against all governments of a despotic nature."

Representing a state which did not wish to give the law, but which would not receive it, he neither cringed nor threatened. "Publish what doctrines and take what course you may," was the language of England's great statesman, "I will shape my way according to the interests and treaties of my country with equal independence."

With such language the Spanish colonies were recognised, because Spain could be no longer responsible for their conduct; because France maintained herself in Spain under the hope that those colonies would furnish an indemnity for the money she had spent in re-establishing despotism in Spain itself; because England, at the head of constitutional governments, found it necessary to check the moral influence of the Holy Alliance, at the head of absolute governments.

Thus the separation of Brazil from Portugal was negotiated, since the struggle between the mother country and her ancient but emancipated possession, was unfavourable to British commerce, embarrassing to British influence, and adverse to the general policy it was found expedient, as I have said, to pursue in Spanish America.

Thus British troops were sent even ostentatiously to Lisbon, since Mr. Canning would not for a moment countenance the belief that England would shrink from her engagements to the weakest ally, although the form of government adopted by that ally was contrary to the particular opinions of the most powerful confederacy in the world.

And here it is especially to be remarked that a policy which, regarded as a whole, bears so decided an appearance, and which was certain to produce so considerable an effect, offers hardly a single point where the success was doubtful,

or the peril great. Developing itself, like that game where the skilful winner advances gradually but surely, each piece protected by another through a series of moves, our policy had only become conspicuous by the last move which obtained its victory.

Our treaties with Buenos Ayres, with Mexico, and Columbia, guarded as they were by our own previous declarations, and also by the important declaration of the American President, could only expose us to a useless and insignificant exhibition of displeasure.

The severance of Brazil from Portugal, as long as Portugal was a consenting party, could with little decency be objected to by an indifferent power; the concession of a charter to Portugal, coming from the sovereign of Portugal himself, was an act which those who contended for the divine right of kings to do what they thought proper, could not well oppose: and finally, the expedition of British troops to Lisbon—sent out at the time when the name of "Mr. Canning" had become the rallying word of England, and "England" herself the rallying word of the free and the intelligent throughout the world, demanded also under circumstances too well known to be disputed, and authorised by treaties which had always been acknowledged, and to which, from the very commencement of his administration, Mr. Canning had called attention—resolutely as it was announced, gallantly as it was made, and important as its impression on the public mind was sure to be—could hardly have been resented with propriety or advantage. On each occasion the minister had made his stand at the happiest opportunity and on the strongest grounds. Abandoning, it is true, all direct resistance to France and to the principles she maintained—where such resistance must have been made with great peril, and with but small chance of success—he had adopted towards both France and her principles a system of opposition which exhibited itself by a variety of successive acts each by itself little likely to be dangerous, and all in their combination certain to be effective. In the first place, instead of meeting the enemy on a ground undermined by factions, and where a large military force, inconsistent with the

nature of our means, would have been necessary, he carried the quarrel into a new hemisphere, and placed it on a question which, mistress of the seas, England had the undoubted power of deciding. Lastly, when a British army was sent to the continent, it was sent not on grounds which might merely be justifiable, but for reasons which were obligatory; while the people to whose aid it marched —open to the ocean, animated by hereditary jealousy against their neighbours, accustomed to British command, and confident in British assistance—were the people whom we were most likely to be allowed to succour with impunity, and most certain, should war ensue, of triumphantly defending.

Something of chance and fortune, no doubt, was mingled in the happy conduct of these events, as is the case in all human affairs; but there is visible a steady and impressive will, tempering and ruling them throughout; the mind and spirit of a man, who was capable of forethought, governed by precaution, and prompt in decision.

Part IV.

FROM THE BEGINNING OF MR. CANNING'S POPULARITY AS FOREIGN MINISTER TO HIS DEATH.

Mr. Canning's position.—Altered tone of opposition.—Favour of King.—Death of Duke of York and of Lord Liverpool.—Struggle for the Premiership.—Nomination of Mr. Canning.—Secession of Duke of Wellington and Anti-Catholic party.—Junction with Whigs.—Formation of Cabinet.—Effect of Canning on the men of his time, and their effect on a subsequent one.—Eastern affairs.—Treaty concerning Greece with Russia and France.—Sickness.—Death.

I.

It is needless to say that a policy which raised England so high in the world's consideration was popular with Englishmen; they were proud of their country and of their minister. The Whig opposition, moreover, which at first depreciated that minister and praised his colleagues, soon began to depreciate his colleagues and to praise him. But Mr. Canning's most extraordinary and unexpected triumph was at court. From being the man in the Cabinet the most odious to the King, he had become the King's pet minister, and one of the most intimate of his chosen circle.

The leader of the House of Commons had one peculiar mode of obtaining his Majesty's confidence, and cultivating his intimacy. It was his arduous duty to send to the Sovereign every night a written account of that night's proceedings in the assembly to which he belonged. It is easy to see the advantage which this established custom may give to a writer who expresses himself with tact and clearness. A minister of foreign affairs has also more opportunities than any other minister of captivating the Royal attention. Foreign politics, which constitute the arena in which kings are pitted against kings, are the politics which most interest royal personages. A monarch

there represents before other monarchs the fame, the power, the character of the nation he rules; he rises as it rises, he falls as it falls.

George IV., whatever his faults, was not without talent or ambition. In early life he wished to distinguish himself in military service abroad, and when, on this being denied him, he entered more deeply than discreetly into politics at home, it was the desire for popularity which connected him with the Opposition. He still remembered the high position which after the battle of Waterloo he held, as Regent of England, amongst the great potentates of the earth; and though personally attached to Lord Castlereagh, and unwilling to sever himself altogether from the sovereigns who had formerly been his allies, and who now in confounding Liberty with Anarchy came forward as the champions of Royalty and order, still he was not insensible to the fact that he had become, little by little, a nonentity in the councils of his peers, and that his advice and opinions, even when expressed by the great warrior who had vanquished Napoleon, were treated with a disregard which was galling to his pride as a monarch, and painful to his feelings as an Englishman. He experienced no small exultation, then, when he saw this state of things reversed, and that the King of England was once more a personage whose policy created hope and alarm. He had, moreover, a singular propensity, which was in fact a sort of madness, for conceiving that he had played a personal part in all the events which had passed in his reign. Amongst other fancies of this kind, he believed, or at least often spoke as if he believed, that he had been on the great battle-field which had terminated the war in 1815; and I have been told by two persons who were present, that one day at dinner, after relating his achievements on this occasion, he turned round to the Iron Duke and said:

"Was it not so, Duke?"

"I have heard your Majesty often say so," replied the Duke, drily.* It was easy, then, for Mr. Canning to

* This story was related by Sir Roundell Palmer in his address to the jury in the trial of Ryves *v.* the Attorney-General. I do not

make George IV. consider Mr. Canning's policy his policy, Mr. Canning's successes his successes, and indeed Mr. Canning always spoke to his Majesty, when the popularity of his administration became apparent, as if he had only followed the inspiration of a prescient and intelligent master.

I should omit more trifling causes of favour, if I did not think them necessary to illustrate the character of the parties, and of the times of which I am speaking, and to show the attention which Mr. Canning, once engaged in the task of recasting our foreign policy, gave to the smallest circumstances which might facilitate it. In the ordinary acceptation of the word, he was not a courtier, or a man of the world. Living, as I have already stated, in the midst of a small clique of admirers, and little with society at large, he confined his remarkable powers of pleasing to his own set. He had determined, however, on gaining George IV.'s goodwill, or, at all events, on vanquishing his dislike, and he saw at once that this was to be done rather indirectly than directly, and that it could best be done by gaining the favour of those ladies of the court whom the King saw most frequently, and spoke to most unreservedly. These were Lady Conyngham and Madame de Lieven. For Lady Conyngham George IV. had a sort of chivalric devotion or attachment; Madame de Lieven he liked and appreciated as the lady who had the greatest knack of seizing and understanding his wishes, and making his court agreeable. She was a musician, and he was fond of music; she had correspondents at every capital in Europe, and knew all the small gossip as well as the most important affairs that agitated Paris, St. Petersburg, and Vienna, and he was amused by foreign gossip and interested in foreign affairs. Her opinion, moreover, as to the position of any one in the world of fashion was law, and George IV. piqued himself especially on being the man of fashion. Mr. Canning resolved, then, on

know whence Sir Roundell derived the anecdote, but I think it as well to say, in favour of its authenticity, that I heard it thirty years ago from a person who was present on the occasion, and that it has been recorded for twenty-six years in my MS.

pleasing this remarkable lady, and completely succeeded. She became, as she afterwards often stated, subjugated by the influence of his natural manner and brilliant talents; and the favour of Madame de Lieven went the further in this instance with the King, since he had previously a sort of prejudice against Canning, as being too much the man of letters, and not sufficiently the fine gentleman. This prejudice once removed, a man of wit, genius, and information, had no inconsiderable hold on a prince whose youth had been passed in the most brilliant society of his time, and who was still alive to the memory of the sparkling wit of Sheridan and the easy and copious eloquence of Fox. Lady Conyngham's alliance was still more important than that of Madame de Lieven, and one of Mr. Canning's first acts was to name Lord Francis Conyngham Under Secretary of State, it is said at the King's desire. At all events, Lord Francis's appointment, which was in every respect a good one, pleased the Marchioness, and satisfied his Majesty, who saw in it the willingness of his Minister to bring even the most private acts of his administration under the Royal cognisance.

II.

An anecdote of the time is worth recording, since it connected itself with the recognition of the Spanish colonies, and the subsequent elevation of the minister to whom this important act was due.

Lady Conyngham had been supposed in early life to have greatly admired (there was no scandal, I should say, attached to this admiration) Lord Ponsonby, then the finest gentleman of his day. Lord Ponsonby, who had long been absent from England, returned from the Ionian Islands, where he had held a small office, not a little desirous to get a better place than the one he had quitted. He met Lady Conyngham at Lady Jersey's, and (so went the story of the day) Lady Conyngham fainted. So interesting a piece of gossip soon reached the ear of the monarch: the friendship of old men is very often as romantic as the love of young men. His Majesty took to his bed, declared himself ill, and would see no one. All business was stopped. After waiting some time, Mr.

Canning at last obtained an interview. George IV. received him lying on a couch in a darkened room, the light being barely sufficient to read a paper.

"What's the matter? I am very ill, Mr. Canning."

"I shall not occupy your Majesty for more than five minutes. It is very desirable, as your Majesty knows, to send Envoys, without delay, to the States of South America, that are about to be recognised."

The King groaned, and moved impatiently.

"I have been thinking, Sire, it would be most desirable to select a man of rank for one of these posts (another groan), and I thought of proposing Lord Ponsonby to your Majesty for Buenos Ayres.'

"Ponsonby!" said the King, rising a little from his reclining position—"a capital appointment! a clever fellow, though an idle one, Mr. Canning. May I ask you to undraw that curtain a little? A very good appointment: is there anything else, Canning, that you wish me to attend to?"

From that moment, said the person who told me this story, Mr. Canning's favour rose more and more rapidly.*

But in mentioning Lady Conyngham and Madame de Lieven, as having been of much use to Mr. Canning, I should also mention Doctor Sir Wm. Knighton. Yet, I would not have it thought that I intend in any way to take from Mr. Canning's character as a great minister by showing that he adopted the small means necessary to rule a court. George IV.'s habits were such that without some aid of this kind no statesman could have got current affairs carried on with due regularity, or initiated any policy that required the Royal support.

III.

The moment was now at hand, when the extent of this Royal support was to be tested; when, in short, it was to

* The correctness of this story has been questioned by a correspondent to the *Times*, who signs "A. W. C." I heard it from a person much in the intimacy of George IV. and Mr. Canning, and noted it when I heard it as curious; but I give it as gossip, which, whether true or false, illustrates the notions of the time, and is not incompatible with what is said by "A. W. C." himself.

be decided whether the Canning party or the Wellington and Eldon party was to be predominant in the Cabinet. The difference in feeling and opinion between the two sections was, as I have said, more or less general; but as the only question on which the members of the same government were allowed to disagree (according to the principle on which the Cabinet had been founded) was Catholic Emancipation, so it was on the Catholic Emancipation question that each tried its strength against the other. In the preceding year the Emancipationists had obtained a majority in the House of Commons, and would have had only a small majority against them in the House of Lords, but for the speech of the Duke of York, heir-presumptive to the throne, who declared that he was, and ever would be, a determined supporter of the Protestant principles of exclusion, maintained by his late father. There is reason to suppose that this declaration was made on an understanding with the King, who thought that he would thus fortify his own opinions, which had become for the last twenty years hostile to the Catholics, and also deter Canning and his friends from pushing forward too eagerly a matter on which they must expect to encounter the opposition of two successive sovereigns.

On the 5th of January, 1827, however, the Duke of York died; and though during his illness he strongly advised his brother to form an anti-Catholic Administration —without which, he said, Catholic Emancipation must ere long be granted—the counsel, though it had distressed George IV. considerably, had not decided him; for his Majesty preferred his ease, as long as he could enjoy it, to facing difficulties which would disorder the ordinary routine of his social life, as well as that of public affairs. The Duke of York's influence on George IV., moreover, was that of personal contact, of a living man of honest and sterling character, over a living man of weaker character; it expired, therefore, when he expired.

Another death soon afterwards occurred. Lord Liverpool was taken ill in February, 1827, and he died in March. This left the first situation in the Government vacant. The moderator between the two conflicting

parties was no more, and a struggle as to the Premiership became inevitable.

Mr. Canning was at this crisis seriously ill at Brighton: and we may conceive the agitation of his restless mind, since Sir Francis Burdett's annual motion on the Catholic claims was just then coming on. His absence would, he knew, be misinterpreted; and literally rising from his bed, and under sufferings which only ambition and duty could have rendered supportable, he appeared to confront his enemies and encourage his followers in his place in the House of Commons.

The debate was more than warm, and an encounter between the Master of the Rolls, Sir J. Copley, afterwards Lord Lyndhurst, and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, was such as might rather be expected from rival chiefs of hostile factions, than from men belonging to the same government, and professing to entertain on most subjects the same opinions. Finally, a majority of four decided against Sir Francis Burdett.

After this trial of strength, it was difficult for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to insist upon the first place in a balanced cabinet, with a majority in both Houses of Parliament against the party which he represented. When, therefore, the King consulted him subsequently as to a new Administration, he said:

"I should recommend your Majesty to form an Administration wholly composed of persons who entertain, in respect to the Roman Catholics, your Majesty's own opinions."

This counsel could not be carried out; but it seemed disinterested, and forced George IV. to allow, after making the attempt, that it was impracticable. The formation of a Cabinet on the old terms of general comprehension thus became a necessity, and to that Government Mr. Canning was indispensable. But his Majesty naturally wished to retain him in a position that would not offend the rest of his colleagues, and to place some person opposed to the Catholics in Lord Liverpool's vacant situation. This Mr. Canning would not consent to. In serving under Lord Liverpool, he had served under a man highly

distinguished from his youth, offered, as early as the death of Mr. Pitt, the first situation in the State, and who, as the head of a government retaining possession of power for many years, had enjoyed the good fortune of holding it at one of the most glorious epochs in British history. That nobleman left no one behind him entertaining his own opinions, and on whom his own claims of precedency could be naturally supposed to descend. Besides, he was Mr. Canning's private friend, and agreed with him on almost every question, except the solitary one of Catholic Emancipation.

It was clear, then, that if the successor to Lord Liverpool shared Lord Liverpool's opinions on Catholic Emancipation, but did not share Lord Liverpool's other opinions, and was more or less adverse to Mr. Canning instead of being particularly attached to him, this would make a great change as to Mr. Canning's position in the Administration, and a great change as to the general character of the Administration itself. Mr. Canning, therefore, could not submit to such a change without damaging his policy and damaging himself. He was to be Cæsar or nobody; the man to lead a party, not the hack of any party that offered him the emoluments of place, without the reality of power.

IV.

But if Mr. Canning was determined to be Head of the Government, or not to belong to it at all, his rivals were equally determined not to belong to a government of which he was to be the head.

In this dilemma George IV. fixed his eyes on the Duke of Wellington. Few at that period considered the duke fit for the management of civil affairs; but George IV. had great confidence in his general abilities, and thought that with his assistance it might be possible to conciliate a minister whom he was disposed to disappoint, and did not wish to displease. But the Duke of Wellington was the very last man under whom it was Mr. Canning's interest to place himself. That he refused to do so is therefore no matter of surprise; his refusal, however, was skilfully framed, and in such terms as were most likely to catch

the ear of the nation, "*he could never consent to a military Premier.*" In the meantime, the struggle that had been going on in the Cabinet and the Court was pretty generally known in the country, and such steps were taken by the two conflicting parties as were most accordant with their several principles and desires. The Duke of Newcastle, on the one hand, claimed the privilege of a Royal audience, and spoke in no measured terms of the parliamentary influence he possessed, and the course he should pursue if Mr. Canning attained his wishes. Mr. Brougham, on the other hand, wrote to Mr. Canning, offering him his unqualified support, and saying that this offer was unconnected with any desire for office, which, indeed, nothing would then tempt him to accept.

V.

A serious contest thus commenced. The different epochs through which this contest was conducted may thus be given. On the 28th of March, the King first spoke to Mr. Canning in a direct and positive manner as to filling up Lord Liverpool's vacancy. Between the 31st of March and the 6th of April affairs remained in suspense. On the 3rd and 4th Mr. Canning and the Duke of Wellington met; and on the 5th, by the desire of the latter, Mr. Canning saw Mr. Peel; the result of these three different interviews being a persuasion on the part of Mr. Canning that it was hoped he would himself suggest that the Premiership should be offered to the Duke of Wellington. On the 9th Mr. Peel again saw Mr. Canning, by the King's desire, and openly stated that "the Duke of Wellington's appointment would solve all difficulties." On the 10th Mr. Canning, not having assented to this suggestion, was empowered to form the new Administration.

The events which followed are well known. On receiving the King's commands, Mr. Canning immediately requested the services of all his former colleagues, to some of whom his application could only have been a mere matter of form. For this reason the surprise affected at many of the answers received appears to me ridiculous.

Mr. Canning and his friends would have retired, if the Duke of Wellington had been made Premier; and the Duke of Wellington and his friends retired when Mr. Canning was made Premier.

Nothing was more simple than the tender of those resignations which were received with such artificial astonishment; and nothing more absurd than the cant accusations which were made against those who tendered them of abandoning the King, &c. &c. Nor was the refutation of such accusations less idle than their propagation. It might not be true that the seceding Ministers met in a room, and said, "We will conspire, and you shall send in your resignation, and I will send in mine." But it is quite clear that they had common motives of action, that each understood what those motives were, that as a body they had long acted in unison, that as a body they intended to continue so to act. In every representative government men constantly band in this manner together, often denying uselessly that they do so; and we have only to refer to a memorable instance of Whig secession, in 1717, in order to find the same accusation as foolishly raised, and the same denial as falsely given.*

But although the resignation of the Duke of Wellington and his friends was almost certain, when the nature of the new arrangement became fully known, the mere fact of Mr. Canning having been commissioned to form a government was not at once taken as the proof that he would possess the power and dignity of Prime Minister.

The Duke of Wellington more particularly seemed determined to consider that nothing as to a Premier was

* Lord Townsend being dismissed in 1717 from the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland, at the instigation of Lord Sunderland, the whole of Lord Townsend's party in the Cabinet at that time, including Walpole, resigned. They were attacked in much the same way as the Duke of Wellington was attacked in 1827, and thought it necessary to defend themselves in the same manner, though there is no doubt that they did resign expressly for the purpose of ousting a government which they thought could not go on without them. In the end they succeeded.—See Coxe's "Memoirs of Sir Robert Walpole," page 107.

yet decided, and replied to Mr. Canning's announcement that he was charged to form an Administration, by saying:

"I should wish to know who the person is whom you intend to propose to his Majesty as the head of the Government."

To this question Mr. Canning replied at once:

"Foreign Office, April 11, 1827.

"My dear Duke of Wellington,

"I believed it to be so generally understood that the King usually entrusts the formation of an Administration to the individual whom it is his Majesty's gracious pleasure to place at the head of it, that it did not occur to me, when I communicated to your Grace yesterday the commands which I had just received from his Majesty, to add that in the present instance his Majesty does not intend to depart from the usual course of proceeding on such occasions. I am sorry to have delayed some hours the answer to your Grace's letter; but from the nature of the subject, I did not like to forward it, without having previously submitted it (together with your Grace's letter) to his Majesty.

"Ever, my dear Duke of Wellington, your Grace's sincere and faithful servant,

(Signed) "George Canning."

The Duke of Wellington's retirement from office and from the command of the army immediately followed, and now the whole anti-Catholic party definitely seceded.

VI.

At a cooler moment such an event might have seriously startled George IV., but the pride of the Sovereign overcame the fears and doubts of the politician. "He had not altered his policy; he had merely chosen from amongst his Ministers, a vacancy occurring in the Premiership, a particular individual to be Prime Minister. It was his clear right to select the Prime Minister. Who was to have this nomination? The Duke of Newcastle forsooth!"

Thus spoke those of his circle whom Mr. Canning had had the address to gain.

Nor did he himself shrink from his new situation. His appointment was announced on the very night it took place, and another writ issued for the borough of Harwich, amidst cheers that rang through the House of Commons. Thus he became at once the Minister of the people of England. They anxiously asked themselves whether he could maintain himself in this position?

A circumstance occurred which went far towards settling opinions on this subject. Almost immediately after the official retreat of the anti-Catholic party, Lord Melville, First Lord of the Admiralty, though in favour of the Catholic claims, sent in his resignation, assigning what in the reign of James I. would have been called a good *Scotch reason* for doing so, namely, *he did not think the Government could last.*

The manner of filling up the situation thus vacated might also have satisfied Lord Melville's scruples. On the 12th his lordship resigned; on the 18th Mr. Canning informed him that the Duke of Clarence, heir-presumptive to the crown, had accepted the office of Lord High Admiral, and would receive Sir George Cockburn and the other Lords of the Admiralty at twelve on the following day. This selection, suggested, it was said, by Mr. Croker, was a decisive blow, and announced the Royal feelings, as far as Mr. Canning was concerned, for two reigns at least. There was still, however, the highest office in the gift of a Minister to fill, that of Lord Chancellor. A supporter of the Catholic claims could hardly at that moment be selected to fill it. Amongst the opponents of those claims there was an eminent lawyer in Parliament, who, if placed on the Woolsack, would become a most valuable ally in the Lords, instead of being a most formidable antagonist in the Commons. Sir John Copley, whose recent altercation with the new Premier on the Catholic question was not forgotten, was the eminent lawyer alluded to; and hardly was it known that the Duke of Clarence was Lord High Admiral, when it was

likewise officially promulgated that Sir John Copley, under the title of Lord Lyndhurst, had accepted the Great Seal. The other appointments immediately made known were those of Mr. Sturges Bourne (a friend of Mr. Canning) as Minister for Home Affairs; of Lord Dudley, a Tory who often voted with Whigs, as Minister of Foreign Affairs; of Mr. William Lamb (after Lord Melbourne), a Whig who often voted with the Tories, as Secretary for Ireland; and of Mr. Scarlett, a Whig, as Attorney-General. The Duke of Portland had accepted the Privy Seal, the Duke of Devonshire the highest court office, Mr. Robinson, resigning the Chancellorship of the Exchequer to Mr. Canning, became Lord Goderich, and Leader in the House of Lords. Lord Palmerston acquired a seat in the Cabinet. Lord Harrowby, Mr. Wynn, and Mr. Huskisson retained their former offices.

A private arrangement was also made for admitting into the Cabinet, at the end of the session, Lord Lansdowne (who was to take the place of Mr. Sturges Bourne), as well as Lord Carlisle and Mr. Tierney.

VII.

In this way commenced that new period in our history, which finally led to the forming of a large Liberal party, capable of conducting the affairs of the country, and to a series of divisions in that Tory party which had so long governed it. I have said that this party was already divided before the death of Lord Castlereagh; for it then contained some influential, well-educated men of Whig opinions, though of Tory alliances, who, whilst opposed to democratic innovations, were dissatisfied with the unpopular resistance to all changes, which was the peculiar characteristic of the Lord Chancellor.

Mr. Canning's junction with this section of politicians brought to it a great additional force.

Nor was this all. His brilliant genius rallied round him all those in Parliament and the country who had enlightened ideas and generous feelings, and were desirous to see England at the head of civilization, and, whether in her conduct towards foreign nations or at home, exhibiting

an interest in the well-being and improvement of mankind. Mr. Canning's feelings on this subject were in no wise disguised by his language.

"Is it not," said he on one occasion, when defending Mr. Huskisson's Free Trade policy—"is it not the same doctrine and spirit now persecuting my right honourable friend which in former times stirred up persecution against the best benefactors of mankind? Is it not the same doctrine and spirit which embittered the life of Turgot? Is it not a doctrine and a spirit such as those which have at all times been at work to stay public advancement and roll back the tide of civilization? A doctrine and a spirit actuating the minds of little men who, incapable of reaching the heights from which alone extended views of human nature can be taken, console and revenge themselves by calumniating and misrepresenting those who have toiled to such heights for the advantage of mankind. Sir, I have not to learn that there is a faction in this country—I mean, not a political faction; I should rather perhaps have said a sect, small in numbers and powerless in might, who think that all advances towards improvement are retrogradations towards Jacobinism. These persons seem to imagine that under no possible circumstances can an honest man endeavour to keep his country upon a line with the progress of political knowledge, and to adapt its course to the varying circumstances of the world. Such an attempt is branded as an indication of mischievous intentions, as evidence of a design to sap the foundations of the greatness of the country."

Again, whilst avowing himself the pupil and disciple of Mr. Pitt, he thus beautifully expresses himself:

"It is singular to observe how ready some people are to admire in a great man the exceptions to the general rule of his conduct rather than the rule itself. Such perverse worship is like the idolatry of barbarous nations, who can see the noonday splendour of the sun without emotion, but who, when he is in eclipse, come forward with hymns and cymbals to adore him. Thus there are those who venerate Mr. Pitt less in the brightness of his meridian glory, than

under his partial obscurity, and who gaze on him with the fondest admiration when he has ceased to shine."

In this manner, by his spirit, eloquence, and abilities, he brought public opinion round in such a manner that it even accommodated itself to his personal position, bringing forward into the light his personal views as the popular ones, and throwing those which had formerly been popular, but which he did not support, into the shade. The great constitutional questions hitherto debated were for a time lost sight of, and party spirit, as Mr. Baring stated, leaving its other and more accustomed topics, seemed for the first time to display itself on subjects simply relating to the commerce and mercantile policy of the country.

VIII.

At first the adherents of the Duke of Wellington were like the Royal emigrants from the old French army at the period of the great Revolution. They thought no officers could be found fitted to take their places. But when they saw another government formed, and formed of materials which, if they could be gradually moulded together, would constitute a composition of solid and perhaps permanent endurance, their feelings were marked by all that violence and injustice which are invariably displayed by men who unexpectedly lose power. Mr. Canning was a renegade for quitting his old political friends to join the Whigs; the Whigs were renegades for abandoning their old political principles to join Mr. Canning. Party rancour had not the candour to acknowledge that if the opinions of Mr. Canning on Catholic Emancipation were sufficient to alienate from him the great bulk of the Conservatives, it was natural that those opinions should attach to him the great bulk of the Liberals. To the attacks of his own party, which he called "the barking of his own turnspits," Mr. Canning was sufficiently indifferent; but there was one voice lifted up against him, the irony of which pierced his proud heart deeply. Alone and stately, Lord Grey, who had long considered himself the great Whig leader, now stood stripped of his followers, and with little disposition to acknowledge the ascendency of another chief-

tain. Contempt was the terrible weapon with which he assailed his brilliant rival, whom from the height of a great aristocratic position and a long and consistent public career, he affected to look down upon as a sort of political adventurer; now carrying out measures the most oppressive to the civil liberties of the people; now spouting liberal phrases which he had no intention to realise; now advocating the claims of the Catholics in glowing words; and now abandoning them when called upon for practical deeds; and finally dressing himself up in borrowed plumes and strutting before the public as the author of a foreign policy the errors of which he cast off upon his colleagues, the merits of which, with equal meanness and unfairness, he took wholly to himself.

If all that Lord Grey said could have been completely justified (which it could not); if all that Lord Grey said, I repeat, had been entirely just (which it was not), the speech which contained it would still have been ill-timed, and impolitic. Mr. Canning represented at that moment those liberal ideas which the public were prepared to entertain. He was encircled by the general popular sympathy, and was therefore in his day, and at the hour I am speaking of, the natural head of the Liberal party. The great necessity of the moment was to save that party from defeat, and give it an advanced position, from which it might march further forward in the natural course of events. If Mr. Canning's party had not obtained power, Lord Grey would never have had a party capable of inheriting it. If Mr. Canning had not become Prime Minister when he did, Lord Grey would not have become Prime Minister three years afterwards.

The public, with that plain common sense which distinguishes most of its judgments, made allowances for the haughty nobleman's anger, but condemned its exhibition. Moreover, the formal charge of Lord Londonderry, who, as his brother's representative, accused Mr. Canning of having forsaken that brother's policy, was more than a counterpoise to Lord Grey's accusation that one Foreign Secretary was no better than the other. Nor did people stop to examine with minute criticism every act of a

statesman who had lived in changeful times, and who was then supporting a policy at home favourable to our trade, and carrying out a policy abroad which inspired affection for our name and reverence for our power.

I have as yet purposely confined my observations to those events which were connected with Spain and Portugal, and the struggle we had entered into against the Holy Alliance in regard to those countries; because it was there that Mr. Canning's talents had been most displayed, and that their consequences had been most important. But we are not to limit our review of his conduct merely to these questions.

It was not merely in Spain or in Portugal that England justified her statesman's proud pretension to hold over nations the umpire's sceptre, and to maintain, as the mediatrix between extremes, the peace of the world. Such was the reputation which this statesman had obtained, even amongst those against whom his policy had been directed, that the Emperor Alexander, disgusted with the irresolution of all his other long, credited allies, turned at last to Mr. Canning, as the only one capable of taking a manly and decided part in the settlement of a question in which his power was to be guarded against on the one hand, and the feelings of his subjects, and the traditions of his empire, were to be considered on the other.

IX.

The affairs in the East during the last few years require a narrative which, though rapid, may suffice to account for the alliance into which at this time we entered.

In 1821 broke out the Greek insurrection. Suppressed in Moldavia and Wallachia, where it originated, it soon acquired strength in the Greek islands and the Morea. Excesses were natural on both sides, and committed by the conquering race, determined to maintain its power, and by the subjugated one, struggling to throw off its chains. The Greek Patriarch was murdered at Constantinople, and a series of savage butcheries succeeded and accompanied this act of slaughter.

By these events Russia was placed in a peculiar and

embarrassing position. She could not countenance insurrection; her system of policy just displayed in Italy could not be reversed in Greece. But the sympathies of religion, and the policy she had long pursued (that of placing herself at the head of the Christian subjects of the Porte by always assuming the air of their protectress), demanded some manifestation of interest in the cause of the rebels. She came forward, then, denouncing the attempt at revolution on the one hand, but protesting on the other against the feelings which this attempt had excited, and the means which had been taken to suppress it. The re-establishment of the Greek Church, the safe exercise of the Christian religion, were insisted upon. The indiscriminate massacre of Christians, and the occupation of Moldavia and Wallachia by Turkish troops, were loudly condemned. A reply within the time fixed not having been given to the note in which these remonstrances were expressed the Russian Ambassador quitted Constantinople, and war seemed imminent.

But it was the desire of Austria and England especially to prevent war, and their joint representations finally succeeded in persuading the Sultan to satisfy the Russian demands; consequently, shortly after Mr. Canning's accession to office, the Greek churches were rebuilt, and the Principalities evacuated, while wanton outrages against the Rayah population were punished with due justice and severity.

Russia, however, now made new requests; even these, through the negotiations of the British ambassador at Constantinople, were complied with; and, finally, after some hesitations and prevarications, the cabinet of St. Petersburg renewed its diplomatic relations with the Porte.

Still it was not difficult to perceive that all the differences hitherto arranged were slight in comparison with those which must arise if the Greek struggle long continued unsettled. In ordinary times, indeed, we shrink before the possibility of a power (whose empire, however wide, conquest would long keep cemented) establishing itself across the

whole of Europe, and holding on either side, here at the Straits of the Baltic, there on those of the Mediterranean, the means of carrying on war, or securing safety and peace as it might seem easy to obtain victory, or advisable to avoid defeat; a power which, placed in this position, would demand the constant vigilance of our fleets, establish an enormous and perpetual drain upon our resources, and which appeared not unlikely to carry through Persia (the governor of which would be merely one of her satraps) disorder and destruction to our Indian empire. In ordinary times this gigantic vision, when seen but dimly and at a distance, has more than once alarmed our government and excited our nation. But the tardy struggle of that race for independence, to whose genius and spirit we owe our earliest dreams of freedom—a struggle in which we were called upon to side with Greeks fighting for Liberty, with Christians contending for Christianity, had awakened feelings which overwhelmed all customary considerations. A paramount enthusiasm, to which a variety of causes, and especially the verses of our great and fashionable poet, were contributing, had seized upon the public mind, and was destined for a while to be omnipotent. Guarded by that enthusiasm, Russia might have planted her eagles upon the walls of Constantinople, if she had appeared as the champion of that land

——"of gods, and godlike men,"

which had at last "exchanged the slavish sickle for the sword," and it is doubtful whether an English Minister could have found a Parliament that would at that moment have sanctioned his defence of the Mahometan power.

X.

Mr. Canning, then, had either to allow the Russian cabinet to pursue its unavowed policy uncontrolled, or to limit its action by connecting himself with the policy which it professed. The contest, it was evident, after the first successes that had attended the Porte's revolted subjects, would not be allowed to terminate in their subjugation. With the co-operation, or without the co-operation of

Great Britain, the Morea was certain to be wrested from the Turks. To stand by neutral, calm spectators of what was certain to take place was to lose our consideration equally with the Ottoman empire and with Christian Europe, and to give to the Government which acted alone in this emergency, as the representative of an universal feeling, an almost universal prestige. But if our interference was expedient, the only question that could arise was as to the time and manner of our interfering.

As early as 1824 Count Nesselrode had had a plan for placing Greece in the situation of the Principalities of the Danube, and the great powers of Europe were invited to consider the subject. Mr. Canning was not averse to this project; but he hoped little from the discordant counsels of the five or six governments called upon to accept it; more especially as both Greece and Turkey, to whom it had become accidentally known, were equally dissatisfied; and he was therefore very properly unwilling to bind his government by a share in conferences which he foresaw were doomed to be fruitless. In short, the negotiators met and separated, and the negotiation failed.

But, in the meantime, affairs had been becoming every day more and more interesting and critical. On the one hand the sympathy for the Greeks had been increased by the unexpected resolution they had displayed; they had a loan, a government, and able and enterprising foreigners had entered into their service. So much was encouraging for their cause. But on the other hand the Egyptian army of Ibrahim Pasha had achieved cruel triumphs, and a great part of the Morea, devastated and depopulated, had submitted to his arms.

During these events the Czar Alexander died; and for some little time there was hesitation in the Imperial counsels. Alexander's successor, however, soon pursued the policy which his accession to the empire had interrupted, and propositions (not unlike those formerly contemplated) were now submitted to our Minister, propositions in the carrying out of which Great Britain and Russia were alone to be combined. The circumstances of the

moment showed that the period of action had arrived, and Mr. Canning no longer shrank from accepting a part which there appeared some hope of undertaking with success.

An alliance between two powers, indeed, afforded a fairer chance of fixing upon a definite course, and maintaining a common understanding, than the various counsels amongst which union had previously been sought. The Greeks also, who had formerly rejected all schemes of compromise (May, 1826), now requested the good offices of England for obtaining a peace upon conditions which would have recognised the supremacy of the Sultan, and entailed a tribute upon his former subjects. Finally (and this affords an interpretation to the whole of that policy which prevailed in the British counsels, from the first to the last moment of negotiation), the treaty of alliance into which Mr. Canning felt disposed to enter, contained this condition :

"That neither Russia nor Great Britain should obtain any advantage for themselves in the arrangement of those affairs which they undertook to settle."

France became subsequently a party to this scheme of intervention, and it was hoped that a confederacy so powerful would induce the Turks to submit quietly to the measures which it had been determined, at all events (by a secret article), if necessary, to enforce.

But whilst these projects were being carried out, these hopes entertained, that dread King, more potent than all others, held his hand uplifted over the head of the triumphant and still ardent statesman.

XI.

On the 2nd of July Parliament had been prorogued; on the 6th the triple alliance was signed. This celebrated treaty was the last act of Mr. Canning's official life. The fatigues of the session, short as it had been, had brought him near the goal to which the enterprising mind and assiduous labours of our most eminent men have too often prematurely conducted them. Of a susceptibility which the slightest word of good or evil keenly affected, and of

that sanguine and untiring temperament which would never suffer him to repose during circumstances in which he thought his personal honour, his public opinions, and the welfare of his political friends required his exertions: tortured by every sneer, irritated by every affront, ready for every toil; in the last few months in which he had risen to the heights of power and ambition—such are human objects—was concentrated an age of anxiety, suffering, and endurance. His countenance became more haggard, his step more feeble, and his eye more languid. Yet at this moment, jaded, restless, and worn, he held in the opinion of the world as high and enviable a position as any public man ever enjoyed. All his plans had succeeded; all his enemies had been overthrown. By the people of England he was cherished as a favourite child; on the Continent he was beloved as the tutelary guardian of Liberal principles, and respected as the peaceful and fortunate arbiter between conflicting interests. Abroad, one of the most formidable alliances ever united against England had been silently defeated by his efforts. At home, the most powerful coalition that a haughty aristocracy could form against himself had been successfully defied by his eloquence and good fortune. The foes of Don Miguel, in Portugal; the enemies of the Inquisition in Spain; the fervent watchers after that dawn of civilization, which now opened on the vast empires of the New World, and which promised again to shine upon the region it most favoured in ancient times; the American patriot, the Greek freedman, and last of all, though not the least interested (whether we consider the wrongs he had endured, the rights to which he was justly born, the links which should have joined him to, and the injustice which had severed him from, the national prosperity of Great Britain), last of all, the Irish Catholic, dwelt fondly and anxiously on the breath of the aspiring statesman at the head of affairs. His health was too precious, indeed, for any one to believe it to be in danger.

The wound, notwithstanding, was given, which no medicine had the power to cure. On the 1st of August the Prime Minister gave a diplomatic dinner; on the 3rd

he was seized with those symptoms which betokened a fatal crisis to be at hand. At this time he was at the Duke of Devonshire's villa at Chiswick, where he had resided since the 20th of July, for the sake of greater quiet and purer air. The room in which he lay, and in which another as proud and generous a spirit, that of Mr. Fox, had passed away, and towards which the eyes of the whole Liberal world were now turned with agonizing suspense for five days, has since become a place of pilgrimage. It is a small low chamber, once a kind of nursery, dark, and opening into a wing of the building, which gives it the appearance of looking into a courtyard. Nothing can be more simple than its furniture or decorations, for it was chosen by Mr. Canning, who had always the greatest horror of cold, on account of its warmth. On one side of the fireplace are a few bookshelves; opposite the foot of the bed is the low chimneypiece, and on it a small bronze clock, to which we may fancy the weary and impatient sufferer often turning his eyes during those bitter moments in which he was passing from the world which he had filled with his name, and was governing with his projects. What a place for repeating those simple and touching lines of Dyer:

> "A little rule, a little sway,
> A sunbeam on a winter's day,
> Is all the proud and mighty have
> Between the cradle and the grave."

After passing some time in a state of insensibility, during which the words "Spain and Portugal" were frequently on his lips, on the 8th of August Mr. Canning succumbed. His remains sleep in Westminster Abbey; a peerage and a pension were granted to his family; and a statue is erected to his memory on the site of his parliamentary triumphs.

The generation amidst which Mr. Canning died, attended his hearse, and crowned his funeral with honours. What is the place he ought to hold in the minds of future generations of his countrymen?

Part V.

One must judge men by a real and uot ideal standard of mankind.—Criticisms on Mr. Canning's conduct.—His faults when in a subordinate position.—His better qualities developed in a superior one.—Nature of faculties.—Influence on his own time and the succeeding one.—Foreign policy considered.—Person; manners; specimens of his various abilities; eloquence; art; and turn for drollery and satire.—Style of speaking of despatches.—Always young, and iuspiring admiration aud affection, even when provoking censure.

In estimating the character of public men, the biographer or critic, if he descend from the sublimity of unbounded panegyric, is often apt to elevate himself at the expense of the person of whom he speaks; and to treat with artificial severity any dereliction from that perfection of conduct which he sees nowhere attained. Thanks to this affected severity or paltry envy, we have hardly a great man left to us. Bolingbroke is nothing but a quack; the elder Pitt only a charlatan; Burke himself a declaimer and a renegade; Fox an ambitious politician out of place; all of which things these great men to a certain degree were, being still great men; and deserving the admiration of a posterity which can hardly hope to furnish their equals.

"No one should write history," said Montaigne, "who has not himself served the State in some civil or military capacity." By which this shrewd and impartial observer meant, that no man is fit to judge the conduct of men of action who is not himself a man of action, and can judge it practically, according to what men really are in the world, and not according to any imaginary theory which he may adopt in the obscure nook of his own chimney corner, as to what they might and ought to be.

"We are not," says Cicero, "in the Republic of Plato, but in the mud of Romulus;" and they who have observed and meditated upon the vicissitudes of empires, will have seen that such have risen or fallen according to the

number of eminent men, endowed with lofty intelligences and daring spirits, whom they have produced. And where have such eminent men existed without defects? Human nature is too imperfect for us to expect to find extraordinary abilities and energies under the constant control of moderate virtues.

To those, then, who have read the preceding pages, the whole of Mr. Canning's career may be shortly summed up in the words of Lord Orford (Horace Walpole), who, speaking of Lord Chatham, says:

"His ambition was to be the most illustrious man in the first country in the world, and he thought that the eminence of glory could not be sullied by the steps to it being passed irregularly" (vol. iv. p. 243).

In the same manner Canning was less scrupulous than he should have been to obtain power and fame. But, in the most memorable part of his life, he made a noble use of the one and well deserved the other. Desirous of office and distinction, he attached himself, on entering life, to that minister by whom office and distinction were most likely to be conferred. The circumstances of the time afforded him not merely an apology, but a fair reason for doing this; still, there seems no injustice in adding that, in ranging himself under the banner of the great commoner's great son, he thought of his own personal prospects as well as of the public interests.

Mr. Pitt died; Mr. Canning was, as he declared himself, henceforth without a leader. Some of his opinions inclined him to unite with his early friends and recent opponents (the Whigs), who then came into office; and this, it seems, he was on the point of doing, when, by a sudden whirl of Fortune's wheel, the persons he was seceding from were jerked into power, and those he was about to join jerked out of it. A young man, conscious of his own abilities, and satisfied in his own mind that, however he might obtain influence, he would use it for the public advantage, he did not refuse a high situation from the party to which he still publicly belonged, in order to follow a party just driven from the Administration, and with which he had but begun to treat.

There are things to say in excuse of this conduct, and I have said them; but no one who wishes that Mr. Canning's life had been without a flaw, can do otherwise than regret that the statesman who made so many subsequent sacrifices for the Catholics, should have joined, at this juncture, a Ministry which rallied its partisans under the cry of "No Popery!"

It is likewise to be regretted that having so frequently expressed his sense of the incapacity of Lord Castlereagh, he should nevertheless have consented first to serve as a subordinate under him when he was mismanaging foreign affairs; and, secondly, to serve as a colleague with him when he was alike lowering us abroad and misgoverning us at home.

During four years he did not shrink from the promulgation of any arbitrary edict—from the suppression of any popular right; and though I admit that many liberal and prudent persons (influenced, I cannot but think, by most exaggerated apprehensions) considered that the strongest measures were necessary at that time to control a spirit of insurrection, which the mingled harshness and incapacity of the ruling Administration had provoked; still, there is a great difference between men who sanction bad laws which a bad government, in which they have had no share, may render momentarily necessary, and men who bring forward bad laws as the result of a bad government which has been carried on by themselves.

It is hardly an excuse to say his errors were committed in an inferior situation, with the idea of rising to a commanding one; but, at all events, when he reached the eminence towards which he had so long been toiling, he made, as I have shown, the best use of that power which had not always been sought for by the best means. Thus, from first to last, we see a man anxious to have power and to use it well; but as anxious to have it as to use it well. That he was blamed and praised with exaggeration was natural; for amidst confronting arrays he was seen for ever in the first rank with the most glittering arms, exciting the admiration of friends and the hatred of foes by his scornful air and ostentatious attitude of defiance.

His talents, by nature showy, were given their peculiar turn by his early education, and his career was shaped to the paths which offered to lead him most easily to distinction. Trained to the juvenile task of writing a foreign language in polished periods, he was at times less anxious to find solid arguments than striking expressions. Not brought up in communication with the uneducated classes, he was more keenly alive to the opinion of the cultivated and refined. Too accommodating as to the temporary suspension of national freedom at home, he was constantly anxious and determined to maintain the power and prestige of the country abroad—throughout his whole life he exhibited the effects of the public school and the close borough.

Like most men who have become illustrious, Mr. Canning owed much to fortune. Lucky in the time of his decease, lucky in the times at which many of those with whom he had hitherto acted deserted him. If he had lived longer, it would have been difficult for him to have kept the station to which he had risen: if he had not been left when he was by a great portion of his party, he would never have obtained the popularity by which his death was hallowed. To few has it happened to be supported by a set of men just as long as their support was useful,—to be quitted by them just when their alliance would have been injurious. The persons who as friends gave Mr. Canning power, as enemies conferred on him reputation. That reputation was above all others, at the time of his demise, amongst his countrymen and contemporaries; and it still retains its predominance, though the influence which he exercised over our domestic policy, and over the events which succeeded his death, is not yet, perhaps, sufficiently recognised. I have already observed that if he had not been Prime Minister in 1827, it is not likely that Lord Grey would have been Premier in 1830. I may add that had not his appointment at the former period brought together all the elements of a great Liberal party, who were allied under the cry of Catholic Emancipation, thus giving a hope and a spirit to the Catholics which they had not previously possessed, the Duke of Wellington

would not within a year or two afterwards have been forced to acknowledge that further resistance to them was impossible. Furthermore, if such men as Lord Melbourne, Lord Palmerston, the Grants, and a large party in the country looking up to these statesmen as safe as well as liberal guides—had not been already connected with the Whigs, and alienated from the Tories, under the influence of Mr. Canning in 1827, the Reform Bill would hardly have been proposed in 1830, and would certainly not have been carried in 1832. The more minutely, in short, that we examine the events of the last thirty-six years, the more we shall perceive how much their quiet development has been owing to Mr. Canning, and to the class of men whom Mr. Canning formed, and in his later days represented.

In determining his merits as director of the foreign policy of Great Britain, I have stood, I confess, by the old doctrines, and argued upon the assumption that England is a great state, disposed to maintain that greatness; that the English people is a proud, generous, and brave people, prepared to assert its principles and its position, and to assume its part in the affairs of the world—a nation that takes its share in the general policy of nations—that feels it has a common interest in the maintenance of justice, in the limitation of unscrupulous ambition, in the progress of civilization. I have supposed that the collective wisdom and experience of past ages, have taught us that human nature is ever, though under different forms, guided by the same rules; that the strong, unless they are adequately restrained, insult and oppress, and finally vanquish the weak; that those who under all circumstances are determined to be at peace, become eventually the certain victims of aggression and war; that the spirit of a people cannot with impunity be allowed to droop and languish without dimming the brightness of its genius and losing the force of its character. That a mere money-making population, which, lapped in the luxury of commercial prosperity, begins to disregard its nice sense of honour, its admiration for valour and daring, becomes daily weaker against the spoiler, and a greater temptation to spoliation.

I have ventured to believe that a noble people has a heart open to noble emotions—that such a heart is not dead to pity for the unfortunate, to sympathy with the brave—to the love of glory inspiring to great deeds, and to the love of power, with the intention to use it for the public good. I do not think it wise to exchange the principles of action derived from these sentiments for a colder, less generous, and, as I feel convinced, a less sound code of political philosophy. The same sentiments which make one man considered and beloved above others, must distinguish the State aspiring to be great and beloved; but it does not follow that if you feel compassion for a drowning man, you are to plunge into the sea to save him if you cannot swim; that if you see two men valiantly struggling against two regiments, you are to rush into the middle of the combat with the certainty of not vanquishing the assailants, and with that of losing your own life. I condemn nations that interfere needlessly with the international affairs of others, as I should the lady who pretended to dictate to her neighbour how she should have her drawing-room swept, or her chimneys cleaned. I condemn governments which threaten heedlessly, and then fail to strike in spite of their threats; but I esteem governments which look carefully after their honour and interests, and do interfere when it is necessary or expedient to do so, in order either to defend that honour, or to maintain those interests; governments cautious to speak, but bold in acting up to their words.

It is with these views that I look upon the foreign policy of Mr. Canning,—a policy for giving England a great and proud position,—for giving to Englishmen a glorious and respected name; for safeguarding our shores by the universal prestige of our bravery and our power; for limiting the ambition of rival states, without needlessly provoking their animosity; for showing a wish to conciliate wherever moderation is displayed, and for displaying a resolution to resist when conciliation is repulsed—as a great English policy, with which the people of England will ever sympathize, and by which the permanent interests of England will best be preserved.

There are men who are anxious for civil commotion,

which they think may be more easily brought about by concentrating the public mind on domestic grievances; there are men who are indifferent to the pride of country —who would as soon be Portuguese, Mexicans, or Moldo-Wallachians, as Englishmen. There are men who, though fame and consideration are the great objects of their countrymen, hold they ought not to be objects for their country. These will repudiate my opinion. But every Briton who is justly proud of his race, who will inquire from a small and despised state the value of being a great and renowned one, will, I believe, recognise the foreign policy I have been describing to be the true policy for maintaining the dignity and authority, without rashly risking the peaceful prosperity, of the British empire.

In person Mr. Canning was favoured by nature, being of a good height, of a strong frame, and of a regular and remarkably intelligent countenance. The glance of his eye when excited, and the smile of his lip when pleased, were often noted by his contemporaries.

> "And on that turtle I saw a rider,
> A goodly man, with an eye so merry,
> I knew 'twas our foreign secretary,
> Who there at his ease did sit and smile
> Like Waterton on his crocodile;
> Craeking such jokes, at every motion,
> As made the turtle squeak with glee,
> And own that they gave him a lively notion
> Of what his own forced-meat balls would be."
>
> *A Dream of a Turtle.*—T. Moore.

Charming in manner, as I have said, constant in attachments, it was observed of him at one period, that he was as dear to his friends as odious to the public.*

Ever ready to praise his subordinates, and to consult the tastes of his associates, he was honoured as a chief as much as he was relished as a companion. His accomplishments were various, and of a kind which may leave disputes open as to the degree of their excellence, but they were all of that brilliant and genial description which was sure to attract sympathy and procure reputation. How

* In the Memoirs of Sir J. Mackintosh, in the "Keepsake," 1829.

many must have chuckled over the following light and lazy piece of satire:

"I am like Archimedes for science and skill,
I am like the young prince who went straight up the hill;
And to interest the hearts of the fair be it said,
I am like a young lady just bringing to bed.
If you ask why the eleventh of June I remember
So much better than April, or Mareh, or December,
'Tis because on that day, as with pride I assure yc,
My sainted progenitor took to his brewery.
On that day in the month he began making beer;
On that night he commenced his connubial career.
On that day he died when he had finished his summing,
And the angels all cried 'here's old Whitbread a coming.'
So that day I still hail with a smile and a sigh,
For his beer with an *e* and his bier with an *i*;
And that day every year, in the hottest of weather,
The whole Whitbread family dine altogether.
My Lords, while the beams of the hall shall support
The roof which o'ershades this respectable court
(Where Hastings was tried for oppressing the Hindoos),
While the rays of the sun shall shine in these windows
My name shall shine bright as my ancestor's shines,
Emblazoned on journals as his upon signs."

How many must have felt their minds respond and their hearts bound at the following argumentative and spirited declamation:

"When the elective franchise was conceded to the Catholics of Ireland, that acknowledgment and anticipation, which I now call upon the House formally to ratify and realize, was, in point of fact, irrevocably pronounced. To give the latter the elective franchise was to admit him to political power; for, to make him an elector and at the same time to render him incapable of being elected, is to attract to our sides the lowest orders of the community, at the same time that we repel from us the highest orders of the gentry. This is not the surest or safest way to bind Ireland to the rest of the Empire in ties of affection. And what is there to prevent our union from being wrought more closely? Is there any moral—is there any physical obstacle? *Opposuit natura?* No such thing. *We have already bridged the channel!* Ireland now sits with us in the Representative Assembly of the Empire;

and when she was allowed to come there, why was she not also allowed to bring with her some of her Catholic children? For many years, alas! we have been erecting a mound, not to assist or improve the inclinations of Providence, but to thwart them. We have raised it high above the waters, and it has stood there frowning hostility and effecting a separation. In the course of time, however, chance and design—the necessities of man and the sure workings of nature—have conspired to break down this mighty structure, till there remains of it only a narrow isthmus standing

> 'between two kindred seas,
> Which mounting view each other from afar,
> And long to meet.'

What, then, shall be our conduct? Shall we attempt to repair the breaches, and fortify the ruins? A hopeless and ungracious undertaking! or shall we leave them to moulder away by time and accident? a sure but distant and thankless consummation! Or shall we not rather cut away at once the isthmus that remains, allow free course to the current which our artificial impediments have constructed, and float upon the mighty waters the ark of our common constitution?"

And we are now to be told that this same man, so playful and jocose, so ornamented and brilliant, was a close arguer, and indefatigable in attendance at his office. But though always ready for business, he would not scruple to introduce a piece of drollery into the most serious affairs. For instance:

The embassy at the Hague is in earnest dispute with the King of Holland; a despatch addressed to Sir Charles Bagot arrives—it is in cypher. The most acute of the attachés set to work to discover the meaning of this particular document; they produce a *rhyme!* they are startled, thrown into confusion; set to work again, and produce another rhyme. The important paper (and it was important) contains something like the following doggrel:

> "Dear Bagot, in commerce the fault of the Dutch
> Is giving too little, and asking too much,
> So since on this policy Mynheer seems bent,
> We'll clap on his vessels just 20 per cent."

As a specimen of his more private and trivial pleasantries may be mentioned his observation to, I believe, Lord Londonderry, who had been telling a story of some Dutch picture he had seen, in which all the animals of antediluvian times were issuing from Noah's Ark, "and," said Lord Londonderry, "the elephant was last." "That of course," said Mr. Canning; "he had been packing up his trunk."

In his celebrated contest with Lord Lyndhurst (then Sir John Copley), that noble lord having appeared in it with a speech borrowed for the most part from a popular pamphlet, written by the late Bishop of Exeter (then Doctor Philpotts), he was overthrown amidst shouts of laughter, by the appropriate recollection of the old song:

> "'Dear Tom, this brown jug that now foams with mild ale,
> Out of which I now drink to sweet Nan of the Vale,'
> Was once *Toby Philpot*."

Again, who does not remember the celebrated sketch of Lord Nugent*—who went out to join the Spanish patriots when their cause was pretty well lost—a sketch which furnished Mr. Canning's most effective defence of the neutral policy he had adopted towards Spain, during the French expedition.

"It was about the middle of last July that the heavy Falmouth coach—(here Mr. Canning was interrupted with loud and continued laughter)—that the heavy Falmouth coach was observed travelling to its destination through the roads of Cornwall with more than its wonted gravity (very loud laughter). The coach contained two inside passengers—the one a fair lady of no inconsiderable dimensions, the other a gentleman who was conveying the succour of his person to the struggling patriots of Spain. I am further informed—and this interesting fact, sir, can

* Lord Nugent was a remarkably large heavy man, with a head even larger than was required to be in proportion to his body.

also be authenticated—that the heavy Falmouth van (which honourable gentlemen, doubtless, are aware is constructed for the conveyance of cumbrous articles) was laden, upon the same memorable occasion, with a box of most portentous magnitude. Now, sir, whether this box, like the flying chest of the conjuror, possessed any supernatural properties of locomotion, is a point which I confess I am quite unable to determine; but of this I am most credibly informed—and I should hesitate long before I stated it to the House, if the statement did not rest upon the most unquestionable authority—that this extraordinary box contained a full uniform of a Spanish general of cavalry, together with a helmet of the most curious workmanship; a helmet, allow me to add, scarcely inferior in size to the celebrated helmet in the castle of Otranto (loud laughter). Though the idea of going to the relief of a fortress, blockaded by sea and besieged by land, in a full suit of light horseman's equipments was, perhaps, not strongly consonant to modern military operations, yet when the gentleman and his box made their appearance, the Cortes, no doubt, were overwhelmed with joy, and rubbed their hands with delight at the approach of the long-promised aid. How the noble lord was received, or what effects he operated on the councils of the Cortes by his arrival, I (Mr. Canning) do not know. Things were at that juncture moving rapidly to their final issue; and how far the noble lord conduced to the termination by throwing his weight into the sinking scale of the Cortes, is too nice a question for me just now to settle."*

Mr. Canning's wit, it is true, was not unfrequently too long and too laboured, and a happy combination of words would almost always seduce him into an indiscretion. The alliteration of "revered and ruptured," as applied to the unfortunate Mr. Ogden, cost him more abuse, and procured him for a time more unpopularity, than the worst of his acts ever deserved. His description of the American navy (in 1812) as "half a dozen fir-frigates, with bits of bunting flying at their heads," excited the American nation more than any actual grievance, and caused in a great

* "Annual Register," 1821.

measure the bitterness of that contest in which we were so insolent and so unsuccessful. His propensity to jokes made him also many enemies in private life. The late Duke of Bedford told a friend of mine that Mr. Canning, when staying with a party at Lord Carrington's (a few weeks after Lord C. had been made a peer by Mr. Pitt), wrote in chalk, on the outside of the hall-door, the following lines:—

> "One Bobby Smith lives here,
> Billy Pitt made him a peer,
> And took the pen from behind his ear."

This unnecessary impertinence, I have heard, Lord Carrington never forgave.

In the art of speaking, our orator's progress, like that of Pulteney, Fox, and all our great parliamentary debaters, with the exception of the two Pitts, Bolingbroke, and Lord Derby, was slow and gradual; and though I have heard Lord Lansdowne (once known as Henry Petty) observe that he considered Canning in his best days even more effective than Fox or Pitt, he had at an earlier period been often accused, by no mean judges, now of being wordy and tedious, now of being rather elegant than argumentative. To time, practice, a proud spirit, and a continually developing understanding, he owed his triumph over these defects. Then it was that his eloquence approached almost to perfection, as we consider the audience, half lounging and sleepy, half serious and awake, to which it was addressed. Quick, easy, and fluent, frequently passionate and sarcastic, now brilliant and ornamented, then again light and playful; or, if he wished it, clear, simple, and incisive; no speaker ever combined a greater variety of qualities, though many have been superior in each of the excellences which he possessed. Remarkable as a general rule for the polish of his language (we have proof, even to the last, of the pains he bestowed upon it), those who knew him well assert that he would sometimes purposely frame his sentences loosely and incorrectly, in order to avoid the appearance of preparation. "Erat memoriæ nulla tamen meditationis suspicio." His action exhibiting when calm an union of grace and dignity,

became, as he warmed, unaffectedly fervent; and made natural by its vigour and animation the florid language and figurative decorations in which he rather too fondly indulged. His arguments were not placed in that clear, logical form, which sometimes enchains, but more often wearies, attention; neither did he use those solemn perorations by which it is attempted to instil awe or terror into the mind. His was rather the endeavour to charm the ear, to amuse the fancy, to excite the feelings, to lead and fascinate the judgment; and in these different attributes of his great art he succeeded in the highest degree, insomuch that though he might be said to want depth and sublimity, the faculties he possessed were elevated to such a pitch, that at times he appeared both profound and sublime.

A great merit, which he finally possessed, was that of seizing and speaking the general sense of the popular assembly he addressed. Sir Robert Peel, his distinguished rival, told me one day, in speaking of Mr. Canning as to this particular, that he would often before rising in his place, make a sort of lounging tour of the House, listening to the tone of the observations which the previous debates had excited, so that at last, when he himself spoke, he seemed to a large part of his audience to be merely giving a striking form to their own thoughts.

Neither were his despatches, though not so elaborately perfect as those of his successor (Lord Dudley), inferior to his orations; possessing precision, spirit, and dignity, they remain what they were justly called by no incompetent authority, "models and masterpieces of diplomatic composition."*

There are critics who have said that there was something in his character which tended to diminish our respect for his talents, though it softened our censure for

* Sir J. Mackintosh, in speaking of Mr. Canning's despatches on the South American question, said that "they contained a body of liberal maxims of policy, and just principles of public law, expressed with a precision, a circumspection, a dignity, which will always render them models and masterpieces of diplomatic composition."—June 15, 1826.

his defects. And it is true that the same unstately love for wit—the same light facility for satire—the same imprudent levity of conduct, that involuntarily lowered our estimate of his graver abilities—involuntarily led us to excuse his graver errors. We at one time blame the statesman for being too much the child—at another we pardon the veteran politician in the same humour in which we would forgive the spoiled and high-spirited schoolboy.

Mr. Canning, indeed, was always young. The head of the sixth form at Eton—squibbing "the doctor," as Mr. Addington was called; fighting with Lord Castlereagh; cutting jokes on Lord Nugent; flatly contradicting Lord Brougham; swaggering over the Holy Alliance; he was in perpetual personal quarrels—one of the reasons which created for him so much personal interest during the whole of his parliamentary career. Yet out of those quarrels he nearly always came glorious and victorious—defying his enemies, cheered by his friends—never sinking into an ordinary man,—though not a perfect one.

No imaginative artist, fresh from studying his career, would sit down to paint this minister with the broad and deep forehead — the stern compressed lip — the deep, thoughtful, concentrated air of Napoleon Bonaparte. As little would the idea of his eloquence or ambition call to our recollection the swart and iron features—the bold and haughty dignity of Strafford. We cannot fancy in his eye the volume depth of Richelieu's—the volcanic flash of Mirabeau's—the offended majesty of Chatham's. Sketching him from our fancy, it would be as a few still living remember him, with a visage rather marked by humour and intelligence than by meditation or sternness; with something of the petulant mingling in its expression with the proud; with much of the playful overruling the profound. His nature, in short, exhibited more of the genial fancy and the quick irritability of the poet who captivates and inflames an audience, than of the inflexible will of the dictator who puts his foot on a nation's neck, or of the fiery passions of the tribune who rouses a people against its oppressors.

Still, Mr. Canning, such as he was, will remain one of the most brilliant and striking personages in our historical annals. As a statesman, the latter passages of his life cannot be too deeply studied; as an orator, his speeches will always be models of their kind; and as a man, there was something so graceful, so fascinating, so spirited in his bearing, that even when we condemn his faults, we cannot avoid feeling affection for his memory, and a sympathetic admiration for his genius.

APPENDIX.

TWO MEMOIRS, READ BY M. DE TALLEYRAND AT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE.

Essai sur les avantages à retirer de colonies nouvelles dans les circonstances présentes. Par le Citoyen Talleyrand. *Lu à la séance publique, de l'Institut national, le 25 messidor, an V.*

Les hommes qui ont médité sur la nature des rapports qui unissent les métropoles aux colonies, ceux qui sont accoutumés à lire de loin les événements politiques dans leurs causes, prévoyaient depuis longtemps que les colonies américaines se séparaient un jour de leurs métropoles, et, par une tendance naturelle que les vices des Européens n'ont que trop accélérée, ou se réuniront entre elles, ou s'attacheront au continent qui les avoisine : ainsi le veut cette force des choses qui fait la destinée des états, et à laquelle rien ne résiste.

Si de tels événements sont inévitables, il faut du moins en retarder l'époque et mettre à profit le temps qui nous en sépare.

Des mesures désastreuses ont porté dans nos colonies la dévastation. L'humanité, la justice, la politique même, commandent impérieusement que, par des mesures fermes et sages, on s'efforce enfin de réparer ces ruines.

Mais, en même temps, ne convient-il pas de jeter les yeux sur d'autres contrées, et d'y préparer l'établissement de colonies nouvelles, dont les liens avec nous seront plus naturels, plus utiles et plus durables ? car il faut bien que le système de notre gouvernement intérieur amène dans nos rapports étrangers des changements qui lui soient analogues.

L'effet nécessaire d'une constitution libre est de tendre sans cesse à tout ordonner, en elle et hors d'elle, pour l'intérêt de l'espèce humaine : l'effet nécessaire d'un gouvernement arbitraire est de tendre sans cesse à tout ordonner, en lui et hors de lui, pour l'intérêt particulier de ceux qui gouvernent. D'après ces tendances opposées, il est incontestable que rien de commun ne peut exister

longtemps pour les moyens, puisque rien de commun n'existait pour l'objet.

La tyrannie s'irrite des regrets alors qu'ils se manifestent; l'indifférence ne les entend pas: la bonté les accueille avec intérêt; la politique leur cherche un contre-poids: or le contre-poids des regrets, c'est l'espoir.

Les anciens avaient imaginé le fleuve de l'oubli, où se perdaient, au sortir de la vie, tous les souvenirs. Le véritable Léthé, au sortir d'une révolution, est dans tout ce qui ouvre aux hommes les routes de l'espérance.

"Toutes les mutations," dit Machiavel, "fournissent de quoi en faire une autre." Ce mot est juste et profond.

En effet, sans parler des haines qu'elles éternisent et des motifs de vengeance qu'elles déposent dans les âmes, les révolutions qui ont tout remué, celles surtout auxquelles tout le monde a pris part, laissent, après elles, une inquiétude générale dans les esprits, un besoin de mouvement, une disposition vague aux entreprises hasardeuses, et une ambition dans les idées, qui tend sans cesse à changer et à détruire.

Cela est vrai, surtout quand la révolution s'est faite au nom de la liberté. "Un gouvernement *libre*," dit quelque part Montesquieu, "c'est-à-dire, *toujours agité*," &c. Une telle agitation ne pouvant pas être étouffée, il faut la régler; il faut qu'elle s'exerce non aux dépens, mais au profit du bonheur public.

Après les crises révolutionnaires, il est des hommes fatigués et vieillis sous l'impression du malheur, dont il faut en quelque sorte rajeunir l'âme. Il en est qui voudroient ne plus aimer leur pays, à qui il faut faire sentir qu'heureusement cela est impossible.

Le temps et de bonnes lois produiront sans doute d'heureux changements; mais il faut aussi des établissements combinés avec sagesse: car le pouvoir des lois est borné, et le temps détruit indifféremment le bien et le mal.

Lorsque j'étais en Amérique, je fus frappé de voir qu'après une révolution, à la vérité très-dissemblable de la nôtre, il restait aussi peu de traces d'anciennes haines, aussi peu d'agitation, d'inquiétude; enfin qu'il n'y avait aucun de ces symptômes qui, dans les états devenus libres, menacent à chaque instant la tranquillité. Je ne tardai pas à en découvrir une des principales causes. Sans doute cette révolution a, comme les autres, laissé dans les âmes des dispositions à exciter ou à recevoir de nouveaux troubles; mais ce besoin d'agitation a pu se satisfaire autrement dans un pays vaste et nouveau, où des projets aventureux amorcent les esprits, où une immense quantité de terres incultes leur donne la facilité d'aller employer loin du théâtre des premières dissensions une activité nouvelle, de placer des espérances dans des spéculations lointaines, de se jeter à la fois au milieu d'une foule d'essais, de se fatiguer enfin par des déplacements, et d'amortir ainsi chez eux les passions révolutionnaires.

Heureusement le sol que nous habitons ne présente pas les mêmes ressources: mais des colonies nouvelles, choisies et établies avec discernement, peuvent nous les offrir; et ce motif pour s'en occuper

ajoute une grande force à ceux qui sollicitent déjà l'attention publique sur ce genre d'établissements.

Les diverses causes qui ont donné naissanee aux colonies dont l'histoire nous a transmis l'origine, n'étaient pas plus déterminantes ; la plupart furent beaucoup moins pures ; ainsi l'ambition, l'ardeur des conquêtes, portèrent les premières colonies des Phéniciens* et des Egyptiens dans la Grèce ; la violence, celle des Tyriens à Carthage† ; les malheurs de la guerre, celle des Troyens fugitifs en Italie‡ ; le commerce, l'amour des richesses, celle des Carthaginois dans les§ îles de la Méditerranée, et sur les côtes de l'Espagne et de l'Afrique ; la nécessité, celles des Athéniens dans l'Asie mineure,‖ lorsqu'ils devinrent trop nombreux pour leur territoire borné et peu fertile ; la prudence, celle des Lacédémoniens à Tarente, qui, par elle, se délivrèrent de citoyens turbulents ; une forte politique, les nombreuses colonies des Romains¶, qui se montraient doublement habiles en cédant à leurs colons une portion des terres conquises, et parce qu'ils apaisaient le peuple, qui demandait sans cesse un nouveau partage, et parce qu'ils faisaient ainsi, des mécontents mêmes, une garde sûre dans le pays qu'ils avaient soumis ; l'ardeur du pillage et la fureur guerrière (bien plus que l'excès de population), les colonies ou plutôt les irruptions des peuples du Nord** dans l'empire romain ; une piété romanesque et conquérante, celles des Européens†† dans l'Asie.

Après la découverte de l'Amérique, on vit la folie, l'injustice, le brigandage de particuliers altérés d'or, se jeter sur les premières terres qu'ils recontrèrent. Plus ils étaient avides, plus ils s'isolaient ; ils voulaient non pas cultiver, mais dévaster : ce n'étaient pas encore là de véritables colonies. Quelque temps après, des dissensions religieuses donnèrent naissance à des établissements plus réguliers : ainsi les Puritains se réfugièrent au nord de l'Amérique ; les Catholiques d'Angleterre, dans le Maryland ; les Quakers, dans la Pensylvanie : d'où Smith conclut que ce ne fût point la sagesse, mais plutôt les vices des gouvernements d'Europe, qui peuplèrent le nouveau monde.

D'autres grands déplacements sont dus aussi à une politique ombrageuse, ou à une politique faussement religieuse : ainsi l'Espagne rejeta de son sein les Maures ; la France, les Protestants ; presque tous les gouvernements, les Juifs ; et partout on reconnut trop tard l'erreur qui avait dicté ces déplorables conseils. On avait des mécontents ; on voulut en faire des ennemis : ils pouvaient servir leur pays ; on les força de lui nuire.

Cette longue expérience ne doit pas être perdue pour nous. L'art de mettre les hommes à leur place est le premier, peut-être, dans

* Cécrops, Cadmus et Danäus. † Didon. ‡ Enée.
§ Syracuse. ‖ Milet, Ephèse.
¶ Grand nombre de petites colonies dans le pays latin ; aucune ne devint célèbre.
** Invasion des Huns, Goths, Vandales, Cimbres, etc. †† Croisades.

la science du gouvernement : mais celui de trouver la place des mécontents est, à coup sûr, le plus difficile ; et, présenter à leur imagination des lointains, des perspectives où puissent se prendre leurs pensées et leurs desirs, est, je crois, une des solutions de cette difficulté sociale.

Dans le développement des motifs qui ont déterminé l'établissement d'un très-grand nombre de colonies anciennes, on remarque aisément qu'alors même qu'elles étaient indispensables, elles furent volontaires ; qu'elles étaient présentées par les gouvernements comme un appât, non comme une peine : on y voit surtout dominer cette idée, que les états politiques devaient tenir en réserve des moyens de placer utilement hors de leur enceinte cette surabondance de citoyens qui, de temps en temps, menaçaient la tranquillité. Ce besoin, au reste, était fondé sur une origine vicieuse : c'était, ou une première loi agraire qui suscitait de menaçantes réclamations qu'il fallait calmer, ou une constitution trop exclusive qui, faite pour une classe, faisait craindre la trop grande population des autres.

C'est en nous emparant de ce qu'ont de plus pur ces vues des anciens, et en nous défendant de l'application qu'en ont faite la plupart des peuples modernes, qu'il convient, je pense, de s'occuper, dès les premiers jours de la paix, de ce genre d'établissements, qui, bien conçus et bien exécutés, peuvent être, après tant d'agitations, la source des plus précieux avantages.

Et combien de Français doivent embrasser avec joie cette idée ! combien en est-il chez qui, ne fût-ce que pour des instants, un ciel nouveau est devenu un besoin ! et ceux qui, restés seuls, ont perdu, sous le fer des assassins, tout ce qui embellissait pour eux la terre natale ; et ceux pour qui elle est devenue inféconde, et ceux qui n'y trouvent que des regrets, et ceux même qui n'y trouvent que des remords ; et les hommes qui ne peuvent se résoudre à placer l'espérance là où ils éprouvèrent le malheur ; et cette multitude de malades politiques, ces caractères inflexibles qu'aucun revers ne peut plier, ces imaginations ardentes qu'aucun raisonnement ne ramène, ces esprits fascinés qu'aucun événement ne désenchante ; et ceux qui se trouvent toujours trop resserrés dans leur propre pays ; et les spéculateurs avides, et les spéculateurs aventureux ; et les hommes qui brûlent d'attacher leur nom à des découvertes, à des fondations de villes, à des civilisations ; tel pour qui la France constituée est encore trop agitée, tel pour qui elle est trop calme ; ceux enfin qui ne peuvent se faire à des égaux, et ceux aussi qui ne peuvent se faire à aucune dépendance.

Et qu'on ne croie pas que tant d'éléments divers et opposés ne peuvent se réunir. N'avons-nous pas vu dans ces dernières années, depuis qu'il y a des opinions politiques en France, des hommes de tous les partis s'embarquer ensemble, pour aller courir les mêmes hasards sur les bords inhabités du Scioto ? Ignore-t-on l'empire qu'exercent sur les âmes les plus irritables, le temps, l'espace, une terre nouvelle, des habitudes à commencer, des obstacles communs à vaincre, la nécessité de s'entr'aider remplaçant le désir de se nuire,

le travail qui adoucit l'âme, et l'espérance qui la console, et la douceur de s'entretenir du pays qu'on a quitté, celle même de s'en plaindre? etc.

Non, il n'est pas si facile qu'on le pense de haïr toujours : ce sentiment ne demande souvent qu'un prétexte pour s'évanouir; il ne résiste jamais à tant de causes agissant à la fois pour l'éteindre.

Tenons donc pour indubitable que ces discordances d'opinions, aussi bien que celles de caractères, ne forment point obstacle à de nouvelles colonies, et se perdront toutes dans un intérêt commun, si l'on sait mettre à profit les erreurs et les préjugés qui ont flétries jusqu'à ce jour les nombreuses tentatives de ce genre.

Il n'entre point dans le plan de ce mémoire de présenter tous les détails d'un établissement colonial, mon but n'étant que d'éveiller l'attention publique, et d'appeler sur ce sujet des méditations plus approfondies et les connaissances de tous ceux qui ont des localités à présenter.

Toutefois je ne m'interdirai point d'énoncer quelques-uns des principes les plus simples, sur lesquels ces établissements doivent être fondés; j'ai besoin de me rassurer moi-même contre la crainte de voir renouveler des essais désastreux. Je pense qu'on sentira le besoin de s'établir dans des pays chauds, parce que ce sont les seuls qui donnent des avances à ceux qui y apportent de l'industrie; dans des lieux productifs de ce qui nous manque et desireux de ce que nous avons, car c'est là le premier lien des métropoles et des colonies. On s'occupera, sans doute, à faire ces établissements vastes, pour que hommes et projets y soient à l'aise; variés, pour que chacun y trouve la place et le travail qui lui conviennent. On saura, surtout, qu'on ne laisse pas s'embarquer inconsidérément une multitude d'hommes à la fois, avant qu'on ait pourvu aux besoins indispensables à un premier établissement; et l'on se rappellera que c'est par la plus inepte des imprévoyances que les expéditions de Mississipi en 1719, et de Cayenne en 1763, ont dévoré tant de milliers de Français.

Jusqu'à présent les gouvernements se sont fait une espèce de principe de politique de n'envoyer, pour fonder leurs colonies, que des individus sans industrie, sans capitaux et sans mœurs. C'est le principe absolument contraire qu'il faut adopter; car le vice, l'ignorance et la misère ne peuvent rien fonder : ils ne savent que détruire.

Souvent on a fait servir les colonies de moyens de punition; et l'on a confondu imprudemment celles qui pourraient servir à cette destination, et celles dont les rapports commerciaux doivent faire la richesse de la métropole. Il faut séparer avec soin ces deux genres d'établissements : qu'ils n'aient rien de commun dans leur origine, comme ils n'ont rien de semblable dans leur destination; car l'impression qui résulte d'une origine flétrie a des effets que plusieurs générations suffisent à peine pour effacer.

Mais quels seront les liens entre ces colonies nouvelles et la France? L'histoire offre des résultats frappants pour décider la question. Les colonies grecques étaient indépendantes; elles prospérèrent au plus haut point. Celles de Rome furent toujours

gouvernées; leurs progrès furent presque nuls, et leurs noms nous sont à peine connus. La solution est encore aujourd'hui là, malgré la différence des temps et des intérêts. Je sais qu'il est difficile de convaincre des gouvernements qui ne savent pas sortir de l'habitude, qu'ils retireront le prix de leurs avances et de leur protection sans recourir à des lois de contrainte : mais il est certain que l'intérêt bien entendu de deux pays est le vrai lien qui doit les unir ; et ce lien est bien fort lorsqu'il y a aussi origine commune : il se conserve même lorsque la force des armes a déplacé les relations. C'est ce qu'on aperçoit visiblement dans la Louisiane, restée française quoique sous la domination espagnole depuis plus de trente ans ; dans le Canada, quoiqu'au pouvoir des Anglais depuis le même nombre d'années : les colons de ces deux pays ont été Français ; ils le sont encore, et un tendance manifeste les porte toujours vers nous. C'est donc sur la connaissance anticipée des intérêts réciproques, fortifiés par ce lien si puissant d'origine commune, que l'établissement doit être formé, et sur la force de cet intérêt qu'il faut compter pour en recueillir les avantages. A une grande distance, tout autre rapport devient, avec le temps, illusoire, ou est plus dispendieux que productif : ainsi, point de domination, point de monopole ; toujours la force qui protége, jamais celle qui s'empare ; justice, bienveillance ; voilà les vrais calculs pour les états comme pour les individus ; voilà la source d'une prospérité réciproque. L'expérience et le raisonnement s'unissent enfin pour repousser ces doctrines pusillanimes qui supposent une *perte* partout où il s'est fait un *gain*. Les principes vrais du commerce sont l'opposé de ces préjugés : ils promettent à tous les peuples des avantages mutuels, et ils les invitent à s'enrichir tous à la fois par l'échange de leurs productions, par des communications libres et amicales, et par les arts utiles de la paix.

Du reste, les pays propres à recevoir nos colonies sont en assez grand nombre ; plusieurs rempliraient parfaitement nos vues.

En nous plaçant dans la supposition où nos îles d'Amérique s'épuiseraient, ou même nous échapperaient, quelques établissements le long de la côte de l'Afrique, ou plutôt dans les îles qui l'avoisinent, seraient faciles et convenables. Un auteur recommandable par les vues qui se manifestent dans ses ouvrages, tous inspirés par l'amour du bien public, le citoyen Montlinot, dans un très-bon mémoire qu'il vient de publier, indique le long de cette côte un archipel d'îles dont plusieurs, quoique fertiles, sont inhabitées et à notre disposition.

M. le duc de Choiseul, un des hommes de notre siècle qui a eu le plus d'avenir dans l'esprit, qui déjà en 1769 prévoyait la séparation de l'Amérique de l'Angleterre et craignait le partage de la Pologne, cherchait dès cette époque à préparer par des négociations la cession de l'Egypte à la France, pour se trouver prêt à remplacer par les mêmes productions et par un commerce plus étendu, les colonies américaines le jour où elles nous échapperaient. C'est dans le même esprit que le gouvernement anglais encourage avec tant de succès la culture du sucre au Bengale ; qu'il avait, avant la guerre, commencé un établissement à Sierra-Leona, et qu'il en préparait un

autre à Boulam. Il est d'ailleurs une vérité qu'il ne faut pas chercher à se taire : la question si indiscrètement traitée sur la liberté des noirs, quel que soit le remède que la sagesse apporte aux malheurs qui en ont été la suite, introduira, tôt ou tard, un nouveau système dans la culture des denrées coloniales : il est politique d'aller au-devant de ces grands changements ; et la première idée qui s'offre à l'esprit, celle qui amène le plus de suppositions favorables, paraît être d'essayer cette culture aux lieux mêmes où naît le cultivateur.

Je viens à peine de marquer quelques positions ; il en est d'autres que je pourrais indiquer également : mais, ici surtout, trop annoncer ce qu'on veut faire est le moyen de ne le faire pas. C'est d'ailleurs aux hommes qui ont le plus et le mieux voyagé, à ceux qui ont porté dans leurs recherches cet amour éclairé et infatigable de leur pays ; c'est à notre Bougainville, qui a eu la gloire de découvrir ce qu'il a été encore glorieux pour les plus illustres navigateurs de l'Angleterre de parcourir après lui ; c'est à Fleurieu, qui a si parfaitement observé tout ce qu'il a vu, et si bien éclairé du jour d'une savante critique les observations des autres ; c'est à de tels hommes à dire au gouvernement, lorsqu'ils seront interrogés par lui, quels sont les lieux où une terre neuve, un climat facilement salubre, un sol fécond et des rapports marqués par la nature, appellent notre industrie et nous promettent de riches avantages pour le jour du moins où nous saurons n'y porter que des lumières et du travail.

De tout ce qui vient d'être exposé, il suit que tout presse de s'occuper de nouvelles colonies : l'exemple des peuples les plus sages, qui en ont fait un des grands moyens de tranquillité ; le besoin de préparer le remplacement de nos colonies actuelles pour ne pas nous trouver en arrière des événements ; la convenance de placer la culture de nos denrées coloniales plus près de leurs vrais cultivateurs ; la nécessité de former avec les colonies les rapports les plus naturels, bien plus faciles, sans doute, dans des établissements nouveaux que dans les anciens ; l'avantage de ne point nous laisser prévenir par une nation rivale, pour qui chacun de nos oublis, chacun de nos retards en ce genre est une conquête ; l'opinion des hommes éclairés qui ont porté leur attention et leurs recherches sur cet objet ; enfin la douceur de pouvoir attacher à ces entreprises tant d'hommes agités qui ont besoin de projets, tant d'hommes malheureux qui ont besoin d'espérance.

Mémoires sur les relations commerciales des Etats-Unis avec l'Angleterre, par le Citoyen Talleyrand. *Lu le* 15 *germinal, an V.*

Il n'est pas de science plus avide de faits que l'économie politique. L'art de les recueillir, de les ordonner, de les juger la constitue presque tout entière ; et, sous ce point de vue, elle a peut-être plus à attendre de l'observation que du génie ; car, arrive le moment où il faut tout

éprouver, sous peine de ne rien savoir ; et c'est alors que les faits deviennent les vérificateurs de la science, après en avoir été les matériaux.

Toutefois il faut se garder de cette manie qui voudrait toujours recommencer les expériences ; et ne jamais rien croire, pour avoir le droit de tout ignorer ; mais on ne doit pas moins repousser cette témérité qui, dédaignant tout ce qui est positif, trouve plus commode de deviner que de voir.

Que faut-il donc ? Unir sans cesse les produits de l'observation à ceux de la pensée ; admettre, sans doute, les résultats que donnent certains faits généraux bien constants, bien d'accord, et vus tout entiers ; mais en même temps, savoir appeler, dans les nouvelles questions et même dans les profondeurs de quelques-unes des anciennes, le secours de faits nouveaux ou nouvellement observés. Il faut se défendre des premiers aperçus, ces axiomes de la paresse et de l'ignorance ; et enfin se défier beaucoup de ces principes ambitieux qui veulent tout embrasser ; ou plutôt, corrigeant l'acception d'un mot dont on a tant abusé, n'appeler du nom de principe que l'idée première dans l'ordre du raisonnement, et non l'idée générale ; que ce qui précède, non ce qui domine.

Plein de ces vérités auxquelles tout nous ramène, j'ai cru pouvoir présenter à la classe de l'Institut à laquelle j'ai l'honneur d'appartenir quelques observations que j'ai été à portée de faire en Amérique, et dont les conséquences m'ont plus d'une fois étonné.

Je me suis persuadé que quelques-unes de ces observations, vérifiées sur toute l'étendue d'un pays longtemps encore nouveau, pourraient être apportées au dépôt de l'économie politique, et y être reçues avec l'intérêt qu'on accorde en histoire naturelle à la plus simple des productions ramassée par un voyageur sur sa route.

Malheureusement, l'esprit de système est dans les sciences ce que l'esprit de parti est dans les sociétés : il trouve les moyens d'abuser même des faits ; car il les dénature, ou il en détourne les conséquences ; raison de plus, non pour les dédaigner, mais pour apprendre à bien connaître et ce qu'ils sont et ce qu'ils prouvent.

On dit proverbialement qu'il ne faut pas disputer sur les faits. Si ce proverbe parvient un jour à être vrai, il restera bien peu de disputes parmi les hommes.

Un fait remarquable dans l'histoire des relations commerciales, et que j'ai été à portée de bien voir, m'a fait connaître particulièrement jusqu'à quel point il importe d'être observateur attentif de ce qui est, alors qu'on s'occupe de ce qui sera et de ce qui doit être. Ce fait est l'activité toujours croissante des relations de commerce entre les Etats-Unis et l'Angleterre ; activité qui, par ses causes et ses résultats, n'appartient pas moins à l'économie politique qu'à l'histoire philosophique des nations.

Lorsque, après cette lutte sanglante, lutte où les Français défendirent si bien la cause de leurs nouveaux alliés, les Etats-Unis de l'Amérique se furent affranchis de la domination anglaise, toutes les raisons semblaient se réunir pour persuader que les liens de com-

merce qui unissaient naguère ces deux portions d'un même peuple allaient se rompre, et que d'autres liens devaient se former : le souvenir des oppressions qui avaient pesé sur les Américains ; l'image plus récente des maux produits par une guerre de sept ans ; l'humiliation de dépendre de nouveau, par leurs besoins, d'un pays qui avait voulu les asservir ; tous les titres militaires subsistent dans chaque famille américaine pour y perpétuer la défiance et la haine envers la Grande-Bretagne.

Que si l'on ajoute ce sentiment si naturel qui devait porter les Américains à s'attacher par la confiance aux Français, leurs frères d'armes et leurs libérateurs ; si l'on observe que ce sentiment s'était manifesté avec force lorsque la guerre se déclara entre l'Angleterre et la France ; qu'à cette époque les discours du peuple américain, la grande majorité des papiers publics, les actes mêmes du gouvernement, semblaient découvrir une forte inclination pour la nation française, et une aversion non moins forte pour le nom anglais ; toutes ces raisons si puissantes de leur réunion doivent entraîner vers ce résultat, que le commerce américain était pour jamais détourné de son cours, ou que, s'il inclinait du côté de l'Angleterre, il faudrait bien peu d'efforts pour l'attirer entièrement vers nous ; dès lors de nouvelles inductions sur la nature des rapports entre la métropole et les colonies, sur l'empire des goûts et des habitudes, sur les causes les plus déterminantes de la prospérité du commerce, sur la direction qu'il peut recevoir des causes morales combinées avec l'intérêt, et, en dernière analyse, beaucoup d'erreurs économiques.

L'observation, et une observation bien suivie, peut seule prévenir ces erreurs.

Quiconque a bien vu l'Amérique ne peut plus douter maintenant que dans la plupart de ses habitudes elle ne soit restée anglaise ; que son ancien commerce avec l'Angleterre n'ait même gagné de l'activité, au lieu d'en perdre, depuis l'époque de l'indépendance des Etats-Unis, et que, par conséquent, l'indépendance, loin d'être funeste à l'Angleterre, ne lui ait été à plusieurs égards avantageuse.

Un fait inattaquable le démontre. L'Amérique consomme annuellement plus de trois millions sterling de marchandises anglaises ; il y a quinze ans elle n'en consommait pas le moitié ; ainsi, pour l'Angleterre, accroissement d'exportation d'objets manufacturés et, de plus, exemption des frais de gouvernement. Un tel fait, inscrit dans les registres de la douane, ne peut être contesté ; mais, on l'a déjà dit, il n'est point de fait dont on n'abuse. Si l'on regardait celui-ci comme une suite nécessaire de toute rupture des colonies, même des colonies à sucre, avec la métropole, on se tromperait étrangement. Si, d'autre part, on voulait croire qu'il tient uniquement à des causes passagères, et qu'il est facile d'obtenir un résultat opposé, on ne se tromperait pas moins. Pour échapper à l'une et l'autre erreur, il ne s'agit que de bien connaître et de bien développer les causes du fait.

Il faut se hâter de le dire, la conduite irréfléchie de l'ancien gouvernement de France a, plus qu'on ne pense, préparé ce résultat

favorable à l'Angleterre. Si, après la paix qui assura l'indépendance de l'Amérique, la France, eût senti tout le prix de sa position, elle eût cherché à multiplier les relations qui pendant la guerre s'étaient heureusement établies entre elle et ses alliés, et qui s'étaient interrompues avec la Grande-Bretagne : alors, les anciennes habitudes étant presque oubliées, on eût pu du moins lutter avec quelque avantage contre tout ce qui pouvait les rappeler. Mais que fit la France à cette époque ? Elle craignit que ces mêmes principes d'indépendance qu'elle avait protégés de ses armes chez les américains, ne s'introduisissent chez elle, et à la paix elle discontinua et découragea toutes relations avec eux. Que fit l'Angleterre ? elle oublia ses ressentiments, et rouvrit promptement ses anciennes communications, qu'elle rendit plus actives encore. Dès lors, il fut décidé que l'Amérique servirait les intérêts de l'Angleterre. Que faut-il en effet pour cela ? qu'elle le veuille et qu'elle le puisse. Or, volonté et pouvoir se trouvent réunis ici.

Ce qui détermine la volonté, c'est l'inclination, c'est l'intérêt. Il paraît d'abord étrange et presque paradoxal de prétendre que les Américains sont portés d'inclination vers l'Angleterre ; mais il ne faut pas perdre de vue que le peuple américain est un peuple dépassionné, que la victoire et le temps ont amorti ses haines, et que chez lui les inclinations se réduisent à de simples habitudes : or, toutes ses habitudes le rapprochent de l'Angleterre.

L'identité de langage est un premier rapport dont on ne saurait trop méditer l'influence. Cette identité place entre les hommes de ces deux pays un caractère commun qui les fera toujours se prendre l'un à l'autre et se reconnaître ; ils se croiront mutuellement chez eux quand ils voyageront l'un chez l'autre ; ils échangeront avec un plaisir réciproque la plénitude de leurs pensées et toute la discussion de leurs intérêts, tandis qu'une barrière insurmontable est élevée entre les peuples de différent langage, qui ne peuvent prononcer un mot sans s'avertir qu'ils n'appartiennent pas à la même patrie ; entre qui toute transmission de pensée est un travail pénible, et non une jouissance ; qui ne parviennent jamais à s'entendre parfaitement, et pour qui le résultat de conversation, après s'être fatigués de leurs efforts impuissants, est de se trouver mutuellement ridicules. Dans toutes les parties de l'Amérique que j'ai parcourues, je n'ai pas trouvé un seul Anglais qui ne se trouva Américain, pas un seul Français qui ne se trouva étranger.

Qu'on ne s'étonne pas, au reste, de trouver ce rapprochement vers l'Angleterre dans un pays où les traits distinctifs de la constitution, soit dans l'union fédérale, soit dans les Etats séparés, sont empreints d'une si forte ressemblance avec les grands linéaments de la constitution anglaise. Sur quoi repose aujourd'hui la liberté individuelle en Amérique ? Sur les mêmes fondements que la liberté anglaise. Sur *l'habeas corpus* et sur le jugement par jurés. Assistez aux séances du Congrès, à celle des législatures particulières ; suivez les discussions qui préparent les lois nationales : où prend-on ses citations, ses analogies, ses exemples ? Dans les lois anglaises, dans les

coutumes de la Grande-Bretagne, dans les règlements du Parlement. Entrez dans les cours de justice : quelles autorités invoque-t-on ? Les statuts, les jugements, les décisions des cours anglaises. Certes, si de tels hommes n'ont pas une tendance vers la Grande-Bretagne, il faut renoncer à connaître l'influence des lois sur les hommes et nier les modifications qu'ils reçoivent de tout ce qui les entoure. Inutilement, les noms de république et de monarchie semblent placer entre les deux gouvernements des distinctions qu'il n'est pas permis de confondre : il est clair pour tout homme qui va au fond des idées, que dans la constitution représentative de l'Angleterre il y a de la république, comme il y a de la monarchie dans le pouvoir exécutif des Américains. Cela a été vrai surtout aussi longtemps qu'a duré la présidence du général Washington ; car la force d'opinion attachée à sa personne dans toute l'Amérique représente facilement l'espèce de pouvoir magique que les publicistes attribuent aux monarchies.

La partie de la nation américaine chez qui l'on devrait rencontrer le moins de préjugés, les hommes qui réunissent l'aisance et l'instruction, ceux qui ont été les moteurs de la révolution, et qui, en soufflant dans l'âme du peuple la haine contre les Anglais, auraient dû, il semble, s'en pénétrer pour toujours ; ceux-là mêmes sont insensiblement ramenés vers l'Angleterre par différents motifs. Plusieurs ont étés élevés en Europe ; et, à cette époque, l'Europe des Américains n'était que l'Angleterre. Ils n'ont guère d'idées comparatives de grandeur, de puissance, d'élévation, que celles qui leur sont fournies par les objets tirés de l'Angleterre; et, surpris eux-mêmes de la hardiesse du pas qu'ils ont fait en se séparant, ils sont ramenés à une sorte de respect pour elle par tous leurs mouvements involontaires. Ils ne peuvent pas se dissimuler que, sans la France, ils n'auraient pas réussi à secouer le joug de l'Angleterre; mais, malheureusement, ils pensent que les services des nations ne sont que des calculs, et non de l'attachement; ils disent même que l'ancien gouvernement de France, alors qu'il fit des sacrifices en leur faveur, agit bien plus pour leur indépendance que pour leur liberté ; qu'après les avoir aidés à se séparer de l'Angleterre, il travailla sourdement à les tenir désunis entre eux, pour qu'ils se trouvassent émancipés sans avoir ni sagesse pour se conduire, ni force pour se protéger.

Ainsi les inclinations, ou, si l'on veut, les habitudes, ramènent sans cesse les Américains vers l'Angleterre ; l'intérêt, bien plus encore ; car la grande affaire, dans un pays nouveau, est incontestablement d'accroître sa fortune. La preuve d'une telle disposition générale s'y manifeste de toutes parts : on la trouve avec évidence dans la manière dont on y traite tout le reste. Les pratiques religieuses elles-mêmes s'en ressentent extrêmement. A cet égard, voici ce que j'ai vu; la liaison avec mon sujet ne tardera pas à se faire sentir.

On sait que la religion a conservé en Angleterre un puissant empire sur les esprits ; que la philosophie même la plus indépendante n'a osé s'y déprendre entièrement des idées religieuses ; que depuis Luther toutes les sectes y ont pénétré, que toutes s'y sont maintenues

que plusieurs y ont pris naissance. On sait la part qu'elles ont eue dans les grandes mutations politiques; enfin, que toutes se sont transplantées en Amérique, et que quelques-uns des Etats leur doivent leur origine.

On pourrait croire d'abord, qu'après leur transmigration ces sectes sont ce qu'elles étaient auparavant, et en conclure qu'elles pourraient aussi agiter l'Amérique. Quelle n'est pas la surprise du voyageur lorsqu'il les voit co-exister toutes dans ce calme parfait qui semble à jamais inaltérable ; lorsqu'en une même maison le père, la mère, les enfants, suivent chacun paisiblement et sans opposition celui des cultes que chacun préfère. J'ai été plus d'une fois témoin de ce spectacle, auquel rien de ce que j'avais vu en Europe n'avait pu me préparer. Dans les jours consacrés à la religion, tous les individus d'une même famille sortaient ensemble, allaient chacun auprès du ministre de son culte, et rentraient ensuite pour s'occuper des mêmes intérêts domestiques. Cette diversité d'opinions n'en apportait aucune dans leurs sentiments et dans leurs autres habitudes: point de disputes, pas même de questions, à cet égard. La religion y semblait être un secret individuel que personne ne se croyait le droit d'interroger ni de pénétrer. Aussi, lorsque de quelque contrée de l'Europe il arrive en Amérique un sectaire ambitieux, jaloux de faire triompher sa doctrine en échauffant les esprits, loin de trouver, comme, partout ailleurs, des hommes disposés à s'engager sous sa bannière, à peine même est-il aperçu de ses voisins, son enthousiasme n'attire ni n'émeut, il n'inspire ni haine ni curiosité; chacun enfin reste avec sa religion et continue ses affaires.*

Un telle impassibilité, que ne peut ébranler le fougueux prosélytisme, et qu'il ne s'agit point ici de juger, mais d'expliquer, a indubitablement pour cause immédiate la liberté et surtout l'égalité des cultes. En Amérique, aucun n'est proscrit, aucun n'est ordonné, dès lors point d'agitations religieuses. Mais cette égalité parfaite a elle-même un principe: c'est que la religion, quoiqu'elle y soit partout un sentiment vrai, y est surtout un sentiment d'habitude: toutes les ardeurs du moment s'y portent vers les moyens d'accroître promptement son bien-être ; et voilà en résultat la grande cause du calme parfait des Américains pour tout ce qui n'est pas, dans cet ordre d'idées, ou moyen ou obstacle.

Remarquons, de plus, que les Américains des villes, naguère colons et dès lors accoutumés à se regarder là comme étrangers, ont dû naturellement tourner leur activité vers les spéculations commerciales, et subordonner à ces spéculations les travaux mêmes de l'agriculture, par laquelle cependant elles doivent s'alimenter. Or,

* Dans un temps de factions politiques cela cesserait d'être exact; car alors chaque secte voudrait nécessairement être l'auxiliaire de tel ou tel parti, comme on l'a déjà vu; mais ces factions une fois calmées la religion deviendrait à l'instant dans les Etats-Unis ce qu'elle y est aujourd'hui; ce qui veut dire en résultat, qu'elle n'y a point de fanatisme pour son propre compte, et c'est déjà beaucoup.—(*Note du citoyen Talleyrand, au mois de ventôse, an VII.*)

une telle préférence, qui suppose d'abord un désir impatient de faire fortune, ne tarde pas à accroître ce désir: car le commerce, qui étend les rapports de l'homme à l'homme, multiplie nécessairement ses besoins; et l'agriculture, qui le circonscrit dans la famille, nécessairement aussi les reduit.

L'Amérique, dont la population est actuellement de plus de quatre millions d'habitants et augmente très-rapidement, est dans l'enfance des manufactures; quelques forges, quelques verreries, des tanneries, et un assez grand nombre de petites et imparfaites fabriques de casimir, de tricot grossier et de coton dans quelques endroits, servent mieux à attester l'impuissance des efforts faits jusqu'à ce jour, qu'a fournir au pays les articles manufacturés de sa consommation journalière. Il en résulte qu'elle a besoin de recevoir de l'Europe, non-seulement une grande partie de ce qu'elle consomme intérieurement, mais aussi une grande partiede ce qu'elle emploie pour son commerce extérieur. Or, tous ces objets sont fournis à l'Amérique si complétement par l'Angleterre, qu'on a lieu de douter si, dans les temps de la plus sévère prohibition, l'Angleterre jouissait plus exclusivement de ce privilége avec ce qui était alors ses colonies, qu'elle n'en jouit actuellement avec les Etats-Unis indépendants.

Les causes de ce monopole volontaire sont, au reste, faciles à assigner: l'immensité de fabrication qui sort des manufactures anglaises, la division du travail, à la fois principe et conséquence de cette grande fabrication, et particulièrement l'ingénieux emploi des forces mécaniques adaptées aux différents procédés des manufactures, ont donné moyen aux manufacturiers anglais de baisser le prix de tous les articles d'un usage journalier au-dessous de celui auquel les autres nations ont pu le livrer jusqu'à ce jour. De plus, les grands capitaux des négociants anglais leur permettent d'accorder des crédits plus longs qu'aucun négociant d'aucune autre nation ne le pourrait faire: ces crédits sont au moins d'un an, et souvent de plus. Il en résulte que le négociant américain qui tire ses marchandises d'Angleterre, n'emploie presque aucun capital à lui dans le commerce, et le fait presque tout entier sur les capitaux anglais. C'est donc réellement l'Angleterre qui fait le commerce de consommation de l'Amérique.

Sans doute que le négociant Anglais doit, de manière ou d'autre, charger ses comptes de vente de l'intérêt de ses fonds dont il accorde un si long usage; mais, comme les demandes se succèdent et s'augmentent, chaque année, il s'établit une balance de paiements réguliers et de crédits nouveaux qui ne laissent en souffrance qu'un premier déboursé, dont l'intérêt est à répartir sur les factures suivantes en même temps que sur les premières. Cette première dette établit, comme on voit, un lien difficile à rompre des deux côtés entre le corréspondant anglais et l'Américain. Le premier craint, s'il arrêtait ses envois, de renverser un débiteur dont la prospérité est la seule garantie de ses avances: l'Américain craint de son côté de quitter un fournisseur avec lequel il y a trop d'anciens comptes à régler. Entre ces intérêts réciproques et cimentés par de longues habitudes, il est à

peu près impossible à une nation tierce d'intervenir. Aussi la France est-elle réduite avec l'Amérique à quelques fournitures de denrées particulières à son sol ; mais elle n'entre point en concurrence avec l'Angleterre sur la vente des objets manufacturés, qu'elle ne pourrait établir en Amérique ni à si bon compte, ni à si long terme de crédit.

Si l'on voulait objecter qu'il s'est fait pendant notre révolution de nombreuses exportations de marchandises françaises en Amérique, la réponse serait bien facile. De telles exportations n'ont rien de commun avec un commerce régulier ; c'est la spéculation précipitée de ceux qui, épouvantés des réquisitions, du maximum et de tous les désastres révolutionnaires, ont préféré une perte quelconque sur leurs marchandises vendues en Amérique, au risque ou plutôt à la certitude d'une perte plus grande s'ils les laissaient en France ; c'est l'empressement tumultueux de gens qui déménagent dans un incendie et pour qui tout abri est bon, et non l'importation judicieuse de négociants qui ont fait un calcul et qui le réalisent. Du reste, ses objets se sont mal vendus, et les Américains ont préféré de beaucoup les marchandises anglaises : ce qui fournit un argument de plus pour l'Angleterre dans la balance des intérêts américains.

Ainsi le marchand américain est lié à l'Angleterre, non seulement par la nature de ses transactions, par le besoin du crédit qu'il y obtient, par le poids du crédit qu'il y a obtenu, mais encore par la loi qui lui impose irrésistiblement le goût du consommateur ; ces liens sont si réels, et il en résulte des rapports commerciaux si constants entre les deux pays, que l'Amérique n'a d'échange véritable qu'avec l'Angleterre ; en sorte que presque toutes les lettres de change que les Américains tirent sur ce continent sont payables à Londres.

Gardons-nous cependant, en considérant ainsi les Américains sous un seul point de vue, de les juger individuellement avec trop de sévérité ; comme particuliers, on peut trouver en eux le germe de toutes les qualités sociales ; mais comme peuple nouvellement constitué et formé d'éléments divers, leur caractère national n'est pas encore décidé. Ils restent Anglais, sans doute par d'anciennes habitudes, mais peut-être aussi parce qu'ils n'ont pas eu le temps d'être entièrement Américains. On a observé que leur climat n'était pas fait ; leur caractère ne l'est pas davantage.

Que l'on considère ces cités populeuses d'Anglais, d'Allemands, de Hollandais, d'Irlandais, et aussi d'habitants indigènes ; ces bourgades lointaines, si distantes les unes des autres ; ces vastes contrées incultes, traversées plutôt qu'habitées par des hommes qui ne sont d'aucun pays ; quel lien commun concevoir au milieu de toutes ces disparités. C'est un spectacle neuf pour le voyageur qui, partant d'une ville principale où l'état social est perfectionné, traverse successivement tous les degrés de civilisation et d'industrie qui vont toujours en s'affaiblissant, jusqu'à ce qu'il arrive en très-peu de jours à la cabane informe et grossière construite de troncs d'arbres nouvellement abattus. Un tel voyage est une sorte d'analyse pratique et

vivante de l'origine des peuples et des Etats : on part de l'ensemble le plus composé pour arriver aux éléments les plus simples ; à chaque journée on perd de vue quelques-unes de ces inventions que nos besoins, en se multipliant, ont rendues nécessaires ; et il semble que l'on voyage en arrière dans l'histoire des progrès de l'esprit humain. Si un tel spectacle attache fortement l'imagination, si l'on se plaît à retrouver dans la succession de l'espace ce qui semble n'appartenir qu'à la succession des temps, il faut se résoudre à ne voir que très-peu de liens sociaux, nul caractère commun, parmi des hommes qui semblent si peu appartenir à la même association.

Dans plusieurs cantons, la mer et les bois en ont fait des pêcheurs ou des bûcherons ; or, de tels hommes n'ont point, à proprement parler, de patrie, et leur morale sociale se réduit à bien peu de chose. On a dit depuis longtemps que l'homme est disciple de ce qui l'entoure, et cela est vrai : celui qui n'a autour de lui que des déserts, ne peut donc recevoir des leçons que de ce qu'il fait pour vivre. L'idée du besoin que les hommes ont les uns des autres n'existe pas en lui ; et c'est uniquement en décomposant le métier qu'il exerce, qu'on trouve le principe de ses affections et de toute sa moralité.

Le bûcheron américain ne s'intéresse à rien ; toute idée sensible est loin de lui : ces branches si élégamment jetées par la nature, un beau feuillage, une couleur vive qui anime une partie de bois, un vert plus fort qui en assombrit un autre, tout cela n'est rien ; il n'a de souvenir à placer nulle part : c'est la quantité de coups de hache qu'il faut qu'il donne pour abattre un arbre, qui est son unique idée. Il n'a point planté ; il n'en sait point les plaisirs. L'arbre qu'il planterait n'est bon à rien pour lui, car jamais il ne le verra assez fort pour qu'il puisse l'abattre : c'est détruire qui le fait vivre ; on détruit partout : aussi tout lieu lui est bon ; il ne tient pas au champ où il a placé son travail, parce que son travail n'est que de la fatigue, et qu'aucune idée douce n'y est jointe. Ce qui sort de ses mains ne passe point par toutes les croissances si attachantes pour le cultivateur ; il ne suit pas la destinée de ses productions ; il ne connaît pas le plaisir des nouveaux essais ; et si en s'en allant il n'oublie pas sa hache, il ne laisse pas de regrets là ou il a vécu des années.

Le pêcheur américain reçoit de sa profession une âme à peu près aussi insouciante. Ses affections, son intérêt, sa vie, sont à côté de la société à laquelle on croit qu'il appartient. Ce serait un préjugé de penser qu'il est un membre fort utile ; car il ne faut pas comparer ces pêcheurs-là à ceux d'Europe, et croire que c'est comme en Europe le moyen de former des maletots, de faire des hommes de mer adroits et robustes : en Amérique, j'en excepte les habitants de Nantuket qui pêchent la baleine, la pêche est un métier de paresseux. Deux lieues de la côte, quand ils n'ont pas de mauvais temps à craindre, un mille quand le temps est incertain, voilà le courage qu'ils montrent ; et la ligne est le seul harpon qu'ils sachent manier : ainsi leur science n'est qu'une bien petite ruse ; et leur

action, qui consiste à avoir un bras pendant au bord d'un bateau, ressemble bien à de la fainéantise. Ils n'aiment aucun lieu; ils ne connaissent la terre que par une mauvaise maison qu'ils habitent; c'est la mer qui leur donne leur nourriture; aussi quelques morues de plus ou de moins déterminent leur patrie. Si le nombre leur paraît diminuer à tel endroit, ils s'en vont, et cherchent une autre patrie où il y ait quelques morues de plus. Lorsque quelques écrivains politiques ont dit que la pêche était une sorte d'agriculture, ils ont dit une chose qui a l'air brillant, mais qui n'a pas de vérité. Toutes les qualités, toutes les vertus qui sont attachées à l'agriculture, manquent à l'homme qui se livre à la pêche. L'agriculture produit un patriote dans la bonne acception de ce mot; la pêche ne sait faire que des cosmopolites.

Je viens de m'arrêter trop longtemps peut-être à tracer la peinture de ces mœurs; elle peut sembler étrangère à ce mémoire, et pourtant elle en complète l'objet, car j'avais à prouver que ce n'est pas seulement par les raisons d'origine, de langage et d'intérêt que les Américains se retrouvent si souvent Anglais. (Observation qui s'applique plus particulièrement aux habitants des villes.) En portant mes regards sur ces peuplades errantes dans les bois, sur le bord des mers et le long des rivières, mon observation générale se fortifiait à leur égard de cette indolence, de ce défaut de caractère à soi, qui rend cette classe d'Américains plus facile à recevoir et à conserver l'impression d'un caractère étranger. La dernière de ces causes doit sans doute s'affaiblir et même disparaître, lorsque la population toujours croissante aura pu, en fécondant tant de terres desertes, en rapprocher les habitants; quant aux autres causes, elles ont des racines si profondes, qu'il faudrait peut-être un établissement français en Amérique pour lutter contre leur ascendant avec quelque espoir de succès. Une telle vue politique n'est pas sans doute à négliger, mais elle n'appartient pas à l'objet de ce mémoire.

J'ai établi que les Américains sont Anglais et par leurs habitudes et par leurs besoins; je suis loin de vouloir en conclure que par leurs inclinations ils soient restés sujets de la Grande-Bretagne. Tout, il est vrai, les ramène vers l'Angleterre industrieuse, mais tout doit les éloigner de l'Angleterre mère-patrie. Ils peuvent vouloir dépendre de son commerce, dont ils se trouvent bien, sans consentir à dépendre de son autorité, dont ils se sont très-mal trouvés. Ils n'ont pas oublié ce que leur a coûté leur liberté, et ne seront pas assez irréfléchis pour consentir à la perdre et à se laisser entraîner par des ambitions individuelles. Ils n'ont plus, il est vrai, l'enthousiasme qui détruit; mais ils ont le bon sens qui conserve. Ils ne haïssent pas le gouvernement anglais; mais ce sera sans doute à condition qu'il ne voudra pas être le leur. Surtout ils n'ont garde de se haïr entre eux; ensemble ils ont combattu, ensemble ils profitent de la victoire. Partis, factions, haines, tout a disparu :* en bons calculateurs ils

* Cela était littéralement vrai lorsque ce mémoire a été lu à l'Institut. Si depuis ce moment des partis s'y sont formés de nouveau, s'il en est un qui travaille à remettre honteusement l'Amérique sous le joug de la Grande-

ont trouvé que cela ne produisait rien de bon. Aussi personne ne reproche à son voisin ce qu'il est ; chacun cherche à le tourner à son avantage : se sont des voyageurs arrivés à bon port, et qui croient au moins inutile de se demander sans cesse pourquoi l'on s'est embarqué et pourquoi l'on a suivi telle route.

Concluons. Pour parvenir à la preuve complète du fait que j'avais avancé sur les relations des Américains avec la Grande-Bretagne, il a fallu repousser les vraisemblances, écarter les analogies ; donc, dans les sciences positives surtout, il importe, sous peine de graves erreurs, de se défendre de ce qui n'est que probable.

Ce fait lui-même bien connu pouvait conduire à de faux résultats ; il portait à croire que l'indépendance des colonies était un bien pour les métropoles : mais en remontant à ses véritables causes, la conséquence s'est resserrée. Maintenant on n'est plus en droit d'y voir autre chose, si ce n'est que l'indépendance des Etats-Unis a été utile à l'Angleterre, et qu'elle le serait à tous les Etats du Continent qui, d'une part, offriraient les mêmes avantages à des colonies du même genre, et, de l'autre, seraient secondés par les mêmes fautes de leurs voisins.

Le développement des causes de ce fait a amené beaucoup de conséquences ultérieures.

En parcourant ces causes on a dû conclure successivement :

1°. Que les premières années qui suivent la paix décident du système commercial des Etats ; et que s'ils ne savent pas saisir le moment pour la tourner à leur profit, elle se tourne presque inévitablement à leur plus grande perte.

2°. Que les habitudes commerciales sont plus difficiles à rompre qu'on ne pense, et que l'intérêt rapproche en un jour et souvent pour jamais ceux que les passions les plus ardentes avaient armés pendant plusieurs années consécutives :

3°. Que dans le calcul des rapports quelconques qui peuvent exister entre les hommes, l'identité de langage est une donnée des plus coneluantes :

4°. Que la liberté et surtout l'égalité des cultes est une des plus fortes garanties de la tranquillité sociale ; car là ou les consciences sont respectées, les autres droits ne peuvent manquer de l'être :

5°. Que l'esprit de commerce, qui rend l'homme tolérant par indifférence, tend aussi à le rendre personnel par avidité, et qu'un peuple surtout dont la morale a été ébranlée par de longues agita-

Bretagne, cela confirmerait beaucoup trop ce que j'établis dans le cours de ce mémoire, que les Américains sont encore Anglais ; mais tout porte à croire qu'un tel parti ne triomphera pas, que la sagesse du gouvernement français aura déconcerté ses espérances ; et je n'aurai pas à rétracter le bien que je dis ici d'un peuple de qui je me plais à reconnaître qu'il n'est Anglais que par des habitudes qui ne touchent point à son indépendance politique, et non par le sentiment qui lui ferait regretter de l'avoir conquise.—(*Note du citoyen Talleyrand, au mois de ventôse, an VII.*)

tions, doit, par des institutions sages, être attiré vers l'agriculture; car le commerce tient toujours en effervescence les passions, et toujours l'agriculture les calme.

Enfin, qu'après une révolution qui a tout changé, il faut savoir renoncer à ses haines si l'on ne veut renoncer pour jamais à son bonheur.

APPENDIX II.

THERE is a circumstance connected with the sketch of Mr. Canning which I am called upon to notice.

The original MS.—which has since then been but very slightly altered—was completed twenty-six years ago, and the greatest part in print not very long afterwards. Before, however, the whole had been sent to the press, I was called away on diplomatic duty, and left the proof-sheets in the hands of Mr. Colburn and the printer's, Beaufort House; abandoning in my own mind the intention of ever publishing or completing the work. In fact, in the busy life of Spain it was forgotten. On my return to England, in 1848, I received a visit from Mr. Bell, then editor of the *Atlas*. He sat with me some time, but did not make to me any particular communication, and it was only some time afterwards that I conjectured the purport of his visit. I then by accident, it might have been in America, read his Life of Mr. Canning, and found it was undeniably based on my original sketch. Many anecdotes were in it that I had had from private sources of a particular description, some of which anecdotes I have now omitted. Whole passages were entirely the same in purport and almost in expression; in fact, there are parts, the one relating to the Treaty of Vienna and the partitions which then took place, for instance, which are almost verbally repeated. I did not think it worth while to take notice of this; I was rather glad than otherwise that the labour, which I had considered thrown away, as far as any object of my own was concerned, had been useful in the composition of an able work by another; and I only now mention the facts I have been relating, to clear myself from any charge of plagiarism which might otherwise be reasonably made against me. A copy of the old proofs I still retain.

H. L. B.

M. R.

1. Separate, *secret, and confidential.* (In cypher.)

Foreign Office, January 31st, 1826.

SIR,

In matters of commerce the fault of the Dutch is offering too little and asking too much. The French are with equal advantage content, so we clap

on Dutch bottoms just 20 *per cent.* Chorus of English Custom House officers and French douaniers: "We clap on Dutch bottoms just 20 *per cent.*; Vous frapperez Falk avec 20 pour ceut."

I have no other commands from his Majesty to convey to your Excellency to-day.

I am, with great truth and respect,
Sir,
Your Excellency's
Most obedient humble servant,
(Signed) GEORGE CANNING.

H. E. The Right Hon.
Sir CHARLES BAGOT, G.C.B., The Hague.

2. Secret.

The Hague, February 3rd, 1826.

SIR,

I sincerely hope that this circumstance will not be productive of any public inconvenience; but I am concerned to state that I do not possess any cypher by which I am enabled to decypher your despatch of the 31st of last month, which I received this morning; the only cypher belonging to this embassy is letter S.

I take the liberty of suggesting that it might be convenient at the present moment that I should be furnished with the cypher given to his Majesty's ambassador at St. Petersburg, or at least with that of which his Majesty's minister at Berlin may be in possession.

I have the honour to be, with the highest respect,
Sir,
Your most obedient humble servant,
(Signed) CHARLES BAGOT.

The Right Hon. GEORGE CANNING.

3. Secret and separate.

Foreign Office, February 6th, 1826.

In consequence of your despatch marked "Secret," of the 3rd instant, I send your Excellency the cyphers and the decyphers I and U, both of which are in the possession of his Majesty's ambassador at St. Petersburg and his Majesty's minister at Berlin.

I regret the circumstance of your Excellency's not having been furnished with the proper cyphers, as I was anxious that your Excellency should receive with as little delay as possible the impression which has been made upon his Majesty's Government by the very opposite feelings and conduct which have been demonstrated by the governments of the Netherlands and France, in the late commercial negotiations with Great Britain.

I am, &c.,
His Excellency (Signed) GEORGE CANNING.
The Right Hon. Sir C. BAGOT.

4. Private.

The Hague, February 13th, 1826.

MY DEAR CANNING,

You have fretted me to fiddlestrings, and I have a great mind not to give you the satisfaction of ever knowing how completely your mystification of me has succeeded. It was more than you had a right to expect when you

drew from me that solemn and official lamentation which I sent you of my inability to decypher his Majesty's commands; but, as the devil would have it, your success did not end here. The post which brought me the decyphers arrived at eleven o'clock at night, when I had only time before I sent off the other messenger to read your grave regret at what had occurred and to acknowledge the receipt of the mail.

The next morning Ferney and I were up by cock-crow to make out "la maudite dépêche;" and it was not till after an hour of most indescribable anxiety that we were put "out of our fear" by finding what it really was, and that "you Pyramus" were not Pyramus, but only "Bottom the weaver."

I could have slain you, but I got some fun myself, for I afterwards put the fair decypher into Douglas' hands, who read it twice without moving a muscle, or to this hour discovering that it was not prose; and returning it to me, declared that it was "oddly worded;" but he had always had a feeling that the despatch must relate to discriminating duties.

C. Bagot.

THE END.

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Dalling and Bulwer, William Henry Lytton Earle Bulwer
Historical characters

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